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MARCH MEETING, 1896.

THE stated meeting was held on Thursday, the 12th instant, at three o'clock, P. M. In the absence of the President, who was out of the State, the First Vice-President, JUSTIN WINSOR, LL.D., was in the chair.

The record of the last meeting was read and approved. The Librarian read the list of donors to the Library, and called attention to a copy of Gov. William Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, reproduced in fac-simile from the original manuscript, and recently published in London, under the editorship of Mr. John Andrew Doyle, a Corresponding Member of this Society. It is a sumptuous volume, and was given by the President, Mr. Adams. For all practical purposes to the student, the work is as valuable as the original manuscript, which is inaccessible to the great body of American historical scholars. The Corresponding Secretary said that he had received letters of acceptance from President G. Stanley Hall, as a Resident Member, and President James B. Angell, as a Corresponding Member, who were elected at the last meeting.

Alexander Agassiz, LL.D., of Cambridge, was elected a Resident Member.

The Vice-President announced the death of a Resident Member, Mr. Benjamin Marston Watson, who died at Plymouth, February 19, and called on William W. Goodwin, D.C.L. Mr. GOODWIN said:—

This loss touches me too closely to allow me to speak of it even here with perfect freedom. But I feel it to be a duty to make a record of my personal indebtedness to my uncle, Mr. Watson, in a matter which has proved to be of the deepest moment to me through my whole life. When I was preparing for Harvard College in Plymouth, more than fifty years ago, there was one subject demanded by the College in which the High School of the town was unable to give me any instruction. This subject was Greek; and for all my early

knowledge of this language, and indeed for the first intimation that there was anything in it which it was worth while for a New England boy to know, I was indebted to my uncle, with whom I was brought up as a younger brother. For more than three years, during most of which he was toiling like a laborer from morning to night on his brilliant task of transforming a piece of common Old Colony meadow, enclosed by bare stony hills, into the beautiful estate now known as Hillside, he devoted his evenings to what he deemed the equally important task of teaching me Greek. And he performed this duty well and conscientiously, sometimes even when my boyish spirit was a little inclined to rebel against the strictness of his discipline. He not only prepared me to enter college without conditions in the Greek which was then required (which was nearly as much as is now read in our best schools), but he induced me to read five books of the Iliad besides. To this early training I owe more than I can express.

Mr. GOODWIN then read an extract from a private letter from our associate Rev. Dr. Edward E. Hale, dated at Santa Barbara, California, March 3, 1896, as follows : —

If you are at the Historical meeting next week, and there is a proper opportunity, I wish you would say that I regret that I cannot say something there about the service Mr. Watson has rendered to our whole community.

We were very close friends in college, and have been ever since. He was one of the early members of the College Natural History Society, — eagerly interested in Botany even then. That Society owed everything to his patience and zeal ; and I, as a very ignorant lay brother, was specially indebted to him.

We all knew, however, that he was indeed an all-round man, and that he would be a leader, wherever he was, in the best enterprises ; and so it has proved. His choice of his life-calling, prompted by his determination to do that which he could do best, was in itself an evidence that he would shrink from no part in life because it involved difficulties. And the place he has earned in the marvellous improvements in forestry, in landscape gardening, and in all those arts which man followed in Paradise and Eden, shows very well how well he foresaw what New England might and must do in the subduing of the world.

He was never one-sided in his enthusiasms. He joined largely in such studies as our Society is formed to encourage. He was well

acquainted with the real standard of what one may call Old Colony literature; and when you could enlist his help in any inquiry as to the earlier centuries, you had a guide on whom you could implicitly rely.

For many of us, the meetings of the Society will lack one of their great attractions now that we cannot hope to meet him there. The Society itself has lost one who connected its studies of to-day with the first and noblest steps in New England History. It was only a pity that he was so modest,—that he said so little as he did. I hope it may prove that he has left on paper some record, however slight, of what he knew.

Samuel Eliot, LL.D., was appointed to write a memoir of the late Martin Brimmer for the Proceedings; Mr. George S. Merriam, a memoir of the late Judge William S. Shurtleff; Mr. George O. Shattuck, a memoir of the late William G. Russell; and Rev. Dr. Edward E. Hale, a memoir of the late Benjamin M. Watson.

Mr. WILLIAM S. APPLETON presented a small silver badge for the Cabinet of the Society, and said:—

In 1862 Mr. William C. Nell gave to this Society a silken flag which had been presented by Governor Hancock to a military company of blacks called the Bucks of America. Up to this time, so far as I know, not a single fact relating to the organization has been communicated to the Society, or appeared elsewhere in print. I have had in my possession for several years a silver badge which was used in some way and for some purpose by the same company, and which I to-day place for preservation in the Cabinet of the Society. It closely resembles the flag, with the same pine-tree and buck and thirteen stars and inscription. It has the initials "M. W.," which I suppose to be those of its former possessor. It has also at one side a small shield with the three fleurs-de-lis of France, as if in compliment to Lafayette. This, however, is mere conjecture. I give it to the Society, with the earnest wish and hope that some member may be able to tell us something about the Bucks of America.

Dr. SAMUEL A. GREEN then said:—

Within a short time I have received from one of our Corresponding Members, Professor Franklin B. Dexter, of New

Haven, a copy of a letter and enclosure which were found in a package of papers, containing for the most part legal briefs, that once belonged to William Wickham (Yale Coll. 1753), an attorney in New York for many years both before and after the Revolution, as well as during that period. The writer of the letter was David Mathews, Mayor of New York from February, 1776, to 1780; and the "old honest Church Clergyman," alluded to in the letter, was the Rev. Mather Byles, Jr., D.D., of Boston. Presumably Dr. Byles was in Nova Scotia at that time, and the articles mentioned in the list, doubtless, were to be sent there for his use. It is often by the flickering of such side-lights, as thrown out by these papers, that the hardships and privations during the War of Independence, whether undergone by patriots or tories, are shown in the clearest manner.

SIR — I beg leave to recommend that M^{rs} Blake have permission to take with her on board the Flag (which M^r Joseph Chew has obtained to bring his family from New London) the Articles mentioned in the enclosed paper.

They are for the use of an old honest Church Clergyman who is almost naked —

I am S^r

Your Humble Serv^t

April 7th 1780

D. MATHEWS

Mayor

CAPTAIN ADYE

[Outside address.]

Captain Adye

Aid de Camp

Commandant

[Indorsed in the handwriting of William Wickham, Esq.]

N^o 237 — 7 April 80.

Permit to send D^r Byles
some necessaries.

[Enclosure.]

Mem^o for Doct^r Byles

1 peice of Linnen, with thread & silk

2 doz wire Buttons

2 pair large black worsted stockings

6 skeins black Crewel

6 linnen pocket Hankercheifs

two of them with a Red ground

1 blue velvet cap

a Gown for a Man of 5 feet 6 Inches to be made one side of dark Blue flowered Russet, the other side Green flowered Russet, if not as convenient to send the Gown ready made please to send Russet enough to make it here, with an Account of the Cost

The Hon. GEORGE S. HALE called attention to a privately printed volume recently presented to the Library by Mr. Francis V. Greene, of New York, being a reproduction in photographic fac-simile of the "Succinct Genealogy of the House of Greene, that were Lords of Drayton," published in 1685 under the fictitious name of Robert Halstead. Of the original edition, it is said that not more than twenty or twenty-four copies were printed; and the reproduction is also extremely rare.

Mr. CHARLES C. SMITH, on behalf of Mr. R. C. Winthrop, Jr., who was unavoidably absent, presented to the Society the following manuscripts from the collection of the late Hon. R. C. Winthrop:—

1. A volume containing some seventy-five original letters, mostly between 1801 and 1816, to James Madison from Hon. George William Erving, for many years United States Minister to Spain. These letters, which deal much with the foreign relations of this country at that period, were recovered after the death of President Madison and before the purchase of his papers by Congress.¹

2. Two letters written in April, 1778, by Benedict Arnold to Miss Elizabeth Deblois of Boston, entreating that lady to become his second wife. They were given to Mr. Winthrop by her great-niece Mrs. Florence Dumaresq Wheatland, with the understanding that they should ultimately go to this Society.

3. An autograph page of Washington Irving's *Life of Columbus*, as prepared by him for the printer and subsequently given to Mr. Winthrop.

4. Two autograph pages of Macaulay's *History of England*, as prepared by him to be copied for the printer. This fragment, which by its very numerous corrections and interlineations in some degree exhibits the writer's method of composition, was given to Mr. Winthrop by Lord Macaulay's niece, Alice Trevelyan, now Lady Knutsford.

¹ For an interesting account of Hon. G. W. Erving by Hon. R. C. Winthrop, together with a tribute to Mr. Erving's diplomatic services by Hon. J. L. M. Curry, see 2 Proceedings, vol. v. pp. 6-33.

The Hon. EDWARD L. PIERCE then read the following paper : —

Recollections as a Source of History.

The memory is in a strict sense the basis of historical narrative. The historian draws his materials from records, newspapers, diaries, letters, and other written or oral accounts; and these at first or second hand come from the memory. The diarist, who writes out at evening the transactions of the day, puts in permanent form what he remembers to have seen and heard since morning. The general, who reports a battle a day or a week after it took place, relies on his own recollections and those of others. But the memory, without which there could be little knowledge of the past, is, even when only a short distance of time is covered, a most uncertain and treacherous faculty; and the historian must keep its limitations constantly in mind. He must not, indeed, overlook other things, — the honesty and fidelity of the narrator who claims to have been on the spot, the accuracy of his perceptions, and the advantage or disadvantage of his standpoint; but assuming these conditions to be satisfactory, he must still be critical, even sceptical, in the treatment of testimony; and his scepticism should be the more exacting the longer the period intervening between the transaction and the report.

This paper will deal not with testimony given shortly after the event, but with recollections coming out several years later, — ten, twenty, or fifty; necessarily coming, where the interval is long, from old people whose other faculties may be still fresh and active, but whose memory, failing them before a general decay has set in, makes their accounts worthless, at least in the decision of any question where controversy has arisen.

The honest man as he advances in years confesses his own weakness in this respect. John Adams, whose mood was reminiscent to the last, writing when nearly seventy-nine of the authorship of a Revolutionary pamphlet, said: "The Group has convinced me of the decay of my memory more than anything that has yet occurred"; and later in the same letter he breaks out pathetically, "Help! Oh, help my memory!"¹

One need not be as old as seventy-nine to distrust himself in this respect. If any one of us were to have all his letters

¹ Works, vol. x. pp. 99, 100.

written in youth and early manhood brought to him, he would find in them vivid pictures of some scenes which he had wholly forgotten and could not, even with the assistance of the written account, recall, and of other scenes which lay in his mind very differently from the way in which he described them at the time.

Retentiveness of memory in persons of equal intelligence varies greatly. Some retain only general impressions, while others retain a firm hold on details. When I used in the seventies to ask Mr. Longfellow about things occurring in the thirties and forties, he would often say, "You had better ask Hillard." The latter was remarkable for the freshness and accuracy of his recollections; and the same may be said of the late Judge Hoar.

One frailty which perplexes advancing years is the incapacity to distinguish between what one has seen and what one has only heard; and the result is that the two kinds of knowledge are hopelessly mixed together. The late Henry W. Paine, while still holding a foremost rank at the bar, used to describe a scene witnessed by him when Daniel Webster presented publicly to Charles Sumner, then a youth, a prize for an essay. Mr. Paine on reading Sumner's Memoir (vol. i. pp. 73, 74) discovered that he had fallen into an anachronism, as the presentation took place before he and Sumner met as students at the Harvard Law School. Happening to see his old comrade at the school, Wendell Phillips, enter the court-room, he communicated to him his error, saying, "What a wretched thing, Wendell, the memory is!" The explanation is, that Mr. Paine had in early life heard the story, and, telling it often, had come to believe that he himself was present.

Recollections may have a considerable value when they corroborate each other, as when they are given by different persons testifying without collusion or conference and generally agreeing in details. This test of evidence is familiar to lawyers.

Recollections may be of some use in coloring a narrative, where the substantial facts have been settled by trustworthy evidence; but even to this extent they are to be taken with extreme caution. I have had occasion to relate scenes, as a debate in Congress, which I had myself witnessed and described at the time; and long afterwards descriptions came out with incidents which I could not recall and which were

not verified by contemporary accounts. I have therefore been obliged to suggest that there might be exaggeration in such recollections.¹ Mr. Hay, one of the biographers of Lincoln, once told me that he and his associate rejected anecdotes and narratives not supported by contemporary records or reports.

This paper relates to periods which have been illustrated by abundant contemporary materials, and is altogether aside of the questions which were raised by Niebuhr's treatment of early Roman history. It deals only with periods where twilight has passed into clear day. Nor will any attempt be made to weigh and compare the different kinds of evidence competent to prove historical facts, whether original, secondary, hearsay, or traditionary. Without doubt the best kind is the testimony of intelligent and trustworthy eye-witnesses, promptly and faithfully transcribed on imperishable records; but with something less than this history must often be content in determining the general features of a transaction, or the share in it which belongs to particular individuals.

The view here given of the value of personal recollections invites attention to some instances where they have been shown to be without value, even after they had found credence with investigators.

In October, 1895, I listened at Cornell University to the opening lecture of a course, by Professor H. Morse Stephens, on the sources of the history of the French Revolution, among them diaries of eye-witnesses, memoirs, and public documents; and he assigned small value to memoirs written several years after the events, by persons who had been contemporary with them.²

The "Boston Tea Party" took place December 16, 1773. The date and general features of the transaction are well ascertained; but no one of its members is known by satisfactory proofs. In order to identify them there should be some contemporaneous record, diary, or letter, or, at least, testimonies of responsible individuals, made independently of each other, substantially concurring, and given at least within fifteen or twenty years after the event. There were obvious reasons

¹ Sumner Memoir, vol. iii. pp. 607 note, 610 note.

² Since this paper was read, Professor Stephens's article entitled "Recent Memoirs of the French Directory" has appeared in the "American Historical Review" for April, 1896, in which (pp. 475, 476, 489) he comments on the value of memoirs as historical evidence.

for reticence until the recognition of American Independence in 1783, but they ended with that date. When the contest with Great Britain had been successfully terminated, an avowal of connection with the destruction of the tea could entail no loss, and would insure honor, perhaps pensions, to the participants. Nevertheless, no one, so far as my researches have gone, confessed to any connection with it till about half a century after the affair, — when he had become so old as to be unable to distinguish between what he had seen and what he had only heard. The credibility of his narration would then be no more than that of the depositions of the Bunker Hill veterans hereinafter referred to.

There is no contemporaneous written evidence as to the participants in the "Tea Party." Peter Edes, writing February 18, 1836, of his father, Benjamin Edes, said: "It is a little surprising that the names of the Tea Party were never made public. My father, I believe, was the only person who had a list of them, and he always kept it locked up in his desk while living."¹ This statement, made in the way it is, does not justify the belief that such a list ever existed.

The number engaged in the "Tea Party" has been stated variously, ranging from seventeen to three hundred; and there have been discrepancies in the reminiscent statements as to the wharf where the ships lay and the number of the ships, though these points are now settled.

John Adams, who may have had some knowledge beforehand of what was to take place, wrote to Mr. Niles as late as May 10, 1819: "I now tell you in truth and upon honor, that I know not and never knew the name of any one of them"; that is, of the participants in the "Tea Party." He avoided knowledge at the time, so as not to be a competent witness against any one in a criminal prosecution. Two years before the date of this letter a visitor "blurted out the name" of one member to Mr. Adams, but he would not commit it to writing. Curiously enough, he states in the same letter that he was at Plymouth at the time of the event, whereas his journal and his letter to James Warren, December 17, 1773, show him to have been then in Boston, — another instance of the untrustworthiness of old men's memories.²

¹ Proceedings, vol. xii. p. 175.

² John Adams's Works, vol. ii. pp. 323, 334; vol. ix. p. 333.

Not long after the date of Mr. Adams's letter to Niles, when an interval of nearly fifty years had passed, and the actors may be presumed to have reached an age between seventy-five and ninety, reporters and interviewers began to seek several garrulous persons who pretended to know about the "Tea Party." Family traditions came out of a father or son having tea found in his boots the morning after the affair. Niles's "Principles and Acts of the Revolution," pp. 485, 486, reprints from the "Boston Daily Advertiser" (date not given)¹ a report of conversations with the survivors of the period, who disagreed as to the number of the ships and the wharf where they lay. This interviewer says: "The contrivers of this measure and those who carried it into effect will never be known. . . . None of those persons who were confidently said to have been of the party (except some who were then minors or very young men) have ever admitted that they were so. The person who appeared to know more than any one I ever spoke with, refused to mention names. . . . There are very few alive now who helped to empty the chests of tea, and these few will probably be as prudent as those who have gone before them." This writer gives no names of persons taking part in the affair.

One of the interviewed persons ascribes to John Rowe the words spoken at the meeting at the Old South Church, "Who knows how tea will mingle with salt water?" — language used to instigate the populace to the act. These words attributed to Rowe have been cited on this authority alone by reputable authors. They are on their face incredible, for Rowe was an owner of one of the tea cargoes, and had enough of human nature in him not to exhort others to destroy his own property. And now just a year ago appeared his Diary, which makes it clear that he disapproved altogether the transaction, and could never have spoken the words which have again and again been put in his mouth.² The result is that the anonymous writer in the "Advertiser," who reports the loose talk of other anonymous people, is not deserving of credit.

In 1835, sixty-two years after the event, "The Traits of the

¹ The original communication has, after a search, been discovered in the issue of that journal for November 10, 1821. The first of the writer's series was published October 30, 1821.

² *Ante*, pp. 18, 19, 81, 82.

Tea Party, being a Memoir of George R. T. Hewes," was published. The author withheld his name, but later he was ascertained to be Benjamin B. Thatcher. Hewes was ninety-three, or nearly that age, when his account was taken down; and he had believed himself to be in his one hundredth year. His testimony is impeached by his "positively affirming as of his own observation that Samuel Adams and John Hancock were both actively engaged in the process of destruction" (pages 192, 193); and he said further that he recognized Hancock, not only by his "ruffles," but by his "figure and gait," "features," and "voice," and that he "exchanged with him an Indian grunt." This was too much for even the credulous Thatcher, who remarks, "This is a curious reminiscence, but we believe it a mistake." Whatever Adams, or even Hancock, may have done in advising the destruction of the tea, no sane person believes that they took a personal part in the scene itself; and there was every reason why such well-known leaders of the Patriot cause should have kept away. Now, Hewes states Hancock's presence just as positively as he states his own; and his narrative can be relied on no more as to himself than as to others, as old men so often remember as seen what they have only heard. Thatcher appends to his memoir of Hewes a list of the "Tea Party," fifty-eight in all, — the first list ever printed, and indeed no name of any one connected with it had been before given to the public. He introduces the list with this explanation: "We subjoin here also a list which has been furnished by an aged Bostonian, well acquainted with the history of our subject, of the persons generally supposed within his knowledge, on traditionary or other evidence, to have been more or less actively engaged in or present at the destruction of the Tea." This is in many points a curious statement. "Persons engaged in" are mixed with those who were merely "present at," whether approving or disapproving. The name of "the aged Bostonian" who knew so much is kept back without any apparent reason. It is a list of those "generally supposed" to have been participants or spectators, not of those known to have been of one or the other class. It is based on "traditionary and other evidence," the word "other" being presumably a weaker kind of evidence than even tradition, which is generally thought to be the weakest of all. And yet this

list has been adopted by Lossing, who makes the number fifty-nine, and by Drake, who carries it to one hundred and thirteen; and upon this evidence alone descendants of persons so enumerated have chosen as a coat of arms a ship being emptied by Mohawks or a teapot fuming at the mouth.

Another "Tea Party" claimant is David Kinnison, the supposed last survivor, who died in 1852 at the age of one hundred and fifteen. His account seems to have been given in 1848, seventy-five years after the event, when he was one hundred and eleven years and nine months old.¹ Even F. S. Drake, whose list, given in his "Tea Leaves" is very receptive and inclusive (page lxxxii), admits that, "owing to the great age of Kinnison when this relation was made to Mr. Lossing, it is possibly in some particulars erroneous, and is given only as a piece of original evidence, and simply for what it is worth." This form of expression "for what it is worth" means in plainer English that it is not worth anything. It does not add to the value of Kinnison's account that in middle life he met with a severe injury, — the fracture of his skull and of his collar-bone and two of his ribs.

Drake (page lxxi) prints the account of Joshua Wyeth, who in 1827, fifty-four years after the event, made his narration at Cincinnati. He was fifteen years of age in 1773, and claimed to have been one of twenty-eight or thirty engaged. It is not likely that the real projectors of the affair, who worked secretly and kept their secret well, would have invited a youth of fifteen to join with them.

At this Society's commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the "Tea Party" in December, 1873, Richard Frothingham, a most careful and honest investigator, read a paper appropriate to the occasion, in which he said: "Several of the party have been identified, but the claims presented for others are doubtful"; but he assigned no names to either class. He said of Thatcher's list that it was "not trustworthy as to those who did the work."

At the same meeting of the Society Thomas C. Amory added two names to the list, those of Amos Lincoln and Colonel James Swan; but he gave no proofs except by saying that when a Harvard student he visited Colonel Swan in London, who "recounted the particulars of the destruction of the tea in which

¹ Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution, vol. i. pp. 499, 500.

he assisted." As Mr. Amory graduated at Harvard College in 1830, Colonel Swan made the communication fifty-seven years after the "Tea Party"; and Mr. Amory first gave it to the public forty-three years after it had been made to him, — thus carried in two memories for one hundred years. These intervals are too long to admit the two narrations as bases of history.

The conclusion is that no one person has been identified with any certainty as a member of the historic "Tea Party," at least upon any evidence on which a plaintiff or a prosecutor could expect a verdict, or upon the lesser evidence, that of reasonable probability, with which historical writers must sometimes be content.

One inquiry comes naturally in this connection, — why it was that after the peace of 1783 the members of the "Tea Party" kept up their reticence concerning their own share in it, — a reticence which appears in John Adams's letter and in the account reprinted in Niles's book. Those who had borne a part in the civil and military history of the Revolution took pride in avowing what they had done for their country in those spheres. The men of the "Tea Party" were then safe from civil and criminal proceedings, and also from social censure, as most of the owners, the Hutchinsons and Clarkes, were *émigrés*. Was their studied silence due to the instinctive shrinking of civilized people to confess a share in any deed of violence, whatever defences it may have, which lacks the sanction of law, either the civil law or the law of war?

When the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument was laid in 1825, fifty years after the battle, there were present one hundred and ninety survivors of the army of the Revolution, forty of whom had been, or claimed to have been, engaged in the conflict of June 17, 1775. One of the directors of the Monument Association, William Sullivan, assisted by other directors and by Judge Thacher, wishing to preserve the details of the battle and to clear up disputed points, caused the depositions of the survivors to be taken. These or a transcript of them in three volumes were sent to this Society in 1842 by William Sullivan's brother Richard; and a committee consisting of Ticknor, Bancroft, and Ellis was appointed to report on the historical character and value of the manuscripts. This committee came to the conclusion that

they should be sealed up and deposited in the Cabinet as curiosities. It is not clear what became of them. They were supposed to have been returned to the Sullivan family at their request, and to have been burned by them; but some of the originals have been since offered for sale at an auction-room in New York City.¹

A note by Dr. Ellis to the Proceedings of the Society for April, 1842 (page 231), says:—

“I took the books to my house in Charlestown and deliberately examined them. Their contents were most extraordinary; many of the testimonies extravagant, boastful, inconsistent, and utterly untrue; mixtures of old men’s broken memories and fond imaginings with the love of the marvellous. Some of those who gave in affidavits about the battle could not have been in it, nor even in its neighborhood. They had got so used to telling the story for the wonderment of village listeners as grandfathers’ tales, and as petted representatives of ‘the spirit of ’76,’ that they did not distinguish between what they had seen and done and what they had read, heard, or dreamed. The decision of the committee was that much of the contents of the volumes was wholly worthless for history, and some of it discreditable, as misleading and false.”

Such is the testimony of a very competent historical critic as to old soldiers’ accounts of battles in which they served, or thought they had served, long ago. It fits well what King Henry foretold of the survivor of Agincourt:—

“Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he’ll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day.”

In the Proceedings of this Society for February, 1881, pp. 340–344, there is an account of the Garrison mob of October 21, 1835, contributed forty-five years after the event by the late Ellis Ames, evidently without the assistance of any contemporaneous notes. He describes what he saw of the mob, and then mentions a call at the law office of A. H. Fiske, on Court Street, just after the affair, and then a call on Charles Sumner at No. 4 Court Street, directly opposite, to whom he related what he had just seen. Then apparently intending to give the impression that Mr. Sumner did not disapprove, or at any rate with any earnestness, what had occurred, he adds:—

¹ Proceedings, vol. ii. pp. 224, 225, 230–232, 234, 235; Narrative and Critical History of America, vol. vi. p. 189.

“He did not express such anxiety about the affair as Mr. Fiske did. If Mr. Sumner had gone to the door of his office, and walked by the railing on the left side about twenty-five feet, he would have come to a window which opened on the south side of Court Street, where by looking out in an easterly direction he could have seen all the doings of the mob which took place in State Street.”

How Mr. Sumner, whose office was in the rear, lighted only by an inside court, is to be held responsible for not looking at a scene on the street of which he knew nothing till it was all passed, it is impossible to see. Besides, the account which Mr. Ames gives and the suggestion he makes are altogether improbable. His statement of the interior arrangements of No. 4 Court Street, where he was only an occasional visitor, does not agree with the recollection of those who had offices there for a long time, among them our associates Mr. George S. Hale and Mr. George O. Shattuck, and who say that no window looked out from the hall on Court Street, but the windows looking out on that street were to be reached only by entering the front offices. Besides Mr. Sumner, who had inherited his father's anti-slavery sentiments, is on record as expressing like sentiments even earlier than the mob; and about the time it took place he became a subscriber for the “*Liberator*.”¹

I knew Mr. Ames from my youth, being born and living till manhood within four miles of his home. In the winter of 1852-53, I passed three months in his law office at Canton, often dining with him and driving with him to hunt up evidence for trials, and to explore disputed boundaries in woods and swamps; and at this time he presented me for admission to the bar. During this intimacy we talked of Mr. Sumner very often, but he never mentioned the incident about the mob. Late in his life he first mentioned it to me on the street in Boston; but I paid little attention to what he said, treating it as a dream of age, as his faculties were then waning and his mood was unlike that of earlier days. He mentioned at the same interview another anti-slavery leader whom he saw active as one of the mob, but whose name he did not include in the account. I first ascertained that his narrative had passed into print when I saw it noted in the *Life of W. L. Garrison* (vol. ii. p. 25 note), where the biographers, though calling it “a singularly mixed account,” interpreted it, so

¹ Sumner Memoir, vol. i. pp. 24-27, 134, 157, 173, 185, 191; vol. iii. p. 69.

far as Mr. Sumner was concerned, in the same manner I had interpreted it. To my note of protest Mr. W. P. Garrison replied:—

“I had no personal knowledge of Mr. Ames, or I might have hesitated to cite him as I did; but I detected his untrustworthiness in relating what took place about the Old State House; for here I had a cloud of witnesses to check him at every point. I have referred in a note to his singularly confused accounts. At a distance from Boston I had to regard him with a certain respect, because the Massachusetts Historical Society admitted him to its ‘Proceedings.’ I think your quarrel is really with that Society.”

Of all reminiscences those concerning public men at Washington are the most untrustworthy. The life of a capital city teems with gossip; it abounds in rivalries, jealousies, calumnies. General Sherman in a letter to President Johnson calls Washington “the focus of intrigue, gossip, and slander.” Stories of public characters have somewhat the interest of fiction, and the mass of readers care little whether they are true or not. Managers of magazines are keen in the search for them; and the result is a medley of tales, with little of truth in them, and that little of truth so compounded with falsehood as to be worse than falsehood entire. They obtain a credence with even intelligent people, who fancy that what is in type must be true. In ten, twenty, or thirty years they are thought worthy of recognition as a source of history. But if any one canon should be rigidly observed by American historians, it is that Washington gossip is not history. I have had occasion elsewhere to deal with some of these irresponsible raconteurs, as Miss Olive Seward, Adam Badeau, and Noah Brooks.¹ Not seldom such writers can be impeached by a record; and they are apt to expose themselves by falling into anachronisms. Now and then a valuable contribution, like that of General J. D. Cox in the “Atlantic Monthly” for August, 1895, appears; but generally reminiscences of Washington life and affairs should be dismissed without consideration by historians.

Mr. Lincoln has been the subject of a vast amount of reminiscences, and will continue to be such for the next twenty years or more. Whether the true Lincoln can ever be dis-

¹ Sumner Memoir, vol. iv. pp. 381–383, 329 note, 613–624; Century Magazine, March, 1895, pp. 792, 793.

covered among the rubbish is doubtful. At a dinner in Washington the host, whose recollections have been published, was relating at length what Lincoln had said to him and even more at length what he had said to Lincoln, when a guest, a witty lawyer of New York City, becoming weary with the monotonous tale, interrupted with the question, "Will you not now tell us of your talks with Washington and Columbus?"

Webster's memory has been the victim of reminiscences by one who understood him not half so well as Friday understood Robinson Crusoe. Mr. Lodge says of Peter Harvey's book: "A more untrustworthy book it would be impossible to imagine. There is not a statement in it which can be safely accepted, unless supported by other evidence. It puts its subject throughout in the most unpleasant light, and nothing has ever been written about Webster so well calculated to injure and belittle him as these feeble and distorted recollections of his loving and devoted Boswell. It is the reflection of a great man upon the mirror of a very small mind and weak memory."¹ And yet, as I happen to know, the book is not nearly so bad as it would have been without the revision by a most accomplished proof-reader of the University Press at Cambridge.

General Grant's "Personal Memoirs" reveal a remarkable inaccuracy of statement in an affair where Secretary Stanton, with whom his relations were not pleasant, was concerned. President Lincoln visited Richmond immediately after its evacuation; and while there he issued an order to General Weitzel to give permission to the Legislature of Virginia — or rather, as the order read, "to the gentlemen who have acted as the Legislature of Virginia in support of the rebellion" — to assemble at Richmond. He then returned to Washington by the Potomac, reaching there the last Sunday evening of his life. From Washington, April 12, 1865, two days before his death, he himself revoked the summons to the above body, giving his reasons. It was his own act, and his last important official act. The circumstances were well known at the time, and shortly after became the subject of considerable discus-

¹ Lodge's Webster, vol. i. p. 95 note.

sion.¹ Nevertheless, twenty years afterwards General Grant, in illustrating what he calls Stanton's "characteristic" as "a man who never questioned his own authority and who always did in war-time what he wanted to do," wrote that Stanton countermanded the above-named order, "notwithstanding the fact that the President was nearer the spot than he was," — meaning that Stanton did at Washington while Lincoln was in or near Richmond what in fact Lincoln himself did at Washington.² The publishers and editors of the recent edition of the "Personal Memoirs" have not seen fit to note this manifest error. This criticism is limited to General Grant's correctness as a narrator of civil affairs; but his accuracy as a narrator of military affairs has also been much questioned.³

American magazines have of late years teemed with descriptions of the campaigns and battles of the Civil War, contributed by officers who had taken part in them. I cannot speak in detail of this literature; but it is worthy of note that Colonel Robert N. Scott, who had charge of the published "Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," took a certain satisfaction in calling the attention of these magazine contributors to the disagreements between their official reports and what they now wrote after an interval of years. They had not even taken the pains to verify what they communicated for popular reading by recurring to what they had written at the time on official responsibility.

It happened to me to read Wilberforce's Life when I was in college; and, Butler's Analogy being then one of my textbooks, I noted what Pitt had said to Wilberforce, — that "the work raised in his mind more doubts than it had answered" (vol. i. p. 95). I remember to have used this extract in my examination, and I have kept it in mind ever since. The biographers

¹ Nicolay and Hay's Lincoln, vol. x. pp. 222-228.

² Personal Memoirs, 1st ed. vol. ii. pp. 505, 506; 2d ed. vol. ii. pp. 355, 356.

³ "From Chattanooga to Petersburg," by W. F. Smith; "Grant *versus* the Record," by Carswell McClellan; Gen. J. D. Cox's review of the "Personal Memoirs" in the New York "Nation," February 25 and July 1, 1886; "The Mistakes of Grant," by W. S. Rosecrans, North American Review, December, 1885, pp. 580-599; "Misunderstandings: Halleck and Grant," by J. B. Fry, Magazine of American History, vol. xvi. p. 561.

include this remark of Pitt among conversational memoranda which they had picked up from one source or another, and represent it to have been made in 1785, while Wilberforce's *Life* was published in 1838. But now, one hundred and eleven years after the remark is said to have been made and fifty-eight years after it was put in print, Mr. Gladstone, in a recent paper in the "*Nineteenth Century*," November, 1895 (pp. 721, 722), disputes the authenticity of Pitt's reported remark, as being from a source "neither contemporary nor first hand," and "in conflict with another account of a directly opposite tenor," according to which Pitt commended the book. If Mr. Gladstone is right in his contention, what credit is to be given to the conversations with which biographies abound?

Conversations are with difficulty recorded by a listener, and reports of them must be taken with much allowance. In ordinary talk there are many omissions to be filled by the context,—by what has been said before, either on the same or an earlier occasion. Then, too, expression and gesture are left to correct an imperfect sentence or complete an unfinished thought. Much depends also not only on the narrator's skill, but also on his abstinence from the natural disposition to color his record by his own feelings and ideas. The late Henry Wilson, just after reading a well-known diary containing much reported to have been said by public men, said to me that he would not talk with any one whom he knew to be keeping a diary. Perhaps he had premonitions of similar records concerning himself; for his own conversations as to public men and events were singularly free and unguarded. The late Nassau W. Senior often visited Paris, where he mingled freely with scholars and public men; and his notes of the "*Conversations*" he listened to have been published. I once mentioned these to Michel Chevalier; and he said that there was a good deal of Mr. Senior in them,—meaning that Mr. Senior in undertaking to report others had fallen into the habit of recording his own thoughts.

Somewhat kindred to the topic in hand is the credibility of diaries. These must often be taken at a discount. Assuming the veracity of the writer, he is apt not to confine himself to what he really knows. For instance, J. Q. Adams in his *Diary* (vol. xii. p. 274) attributes to Webster the authorship of Whig

resolutions in September, 1846 ; but intrinsic as well as outside evidence points to another author, — J. Thomas Stevenson, a merchant of the time, who reported them to the convention. They lack terseness and vigor, — qualities which predominate in Webster's style.¹

But whatever may be the value of diaries, greater or less according to the moral and intellectual character of the diarist and his opportunities of observation, no credit should be given to anonymous diaries. Those which cannot be tested by the character of the diarist are worthless, and should never be cited except to be repudiated. No honest narrator will withhold his name from what he declares to the world he has seen or heard. A single instance must suffice. The "North American Review" in 1879 (vol. cxxix. pp. 125, 375, 484) printed what purported to be the "Diary of a Public Man," describing, with personal details of various public men, what was going on in New York City and Washington in the winter of 1860-1861, just before the outbreak of the Rebellion. The editor, A. T. Rice, refused to give the name of the writer to George T. Curtis, the biographer of President Buchanan.² Other persons have sought to learn the authorship of this "Diary," but without success ; and perhaps, Mr. Rice having died, it is unknown to any living person. Several names have been suggested, but probably without reason. The latest theory is that the "Diary" is a pure invention, — a fictitious narrative by an adventurer recently deceased, who had much to do with newspapers and magazines, who had a career both in this country and in England, and who late in his life figured in a scandalous trial in London. He was able, by a general knowledge of social occasions and of the presence of public men in the two cities, to give an air of probability to his narrative ; but a close scrutiny reveals his untrustworthiness.

This diarist makes himself the most remarkable personage of modern times. His counsels and mediation were eagerly sought by men of adverse opinions and positions, and he was admitted by them to most confidential interviews. Among these were Douglas, Seward, Sumner, the British Minister, and the Confederate chiefs Orr and Forsyth. He was solicited

¹ Memoir of Charles Sumner, vol. iii. pp. 124 note, 125 note.

² President Buchanan's Life, vol. ii. pp. 391 note, 394, 395.

to assist in making the Cabinet; all the departments were open to him; and Lincoln, as soon as he was in office, though weighted with unexampled burdens, put aside all other duties to receive him and listen to his wisdom. Who could be this marvellous man, so miscellaneous in his affiliations, whose thoughts statesmen yearned to hear in those dread hours? It is easier to suppose that he did not exist than to point him out among the characters of that eventful period.

The "Diary" bears in some entries intrinsic evidence of not being genuine. In the first place it attributes to Mr. Sumner activity in cabinet-making,—a function from which by taste and habit he kept aloof. In the next place it states that the diarist and another person held by appointment a conference with President Lincoln March 7, his third day in office, and in the afternoon of that day. Now it appears, by the public journals of March 8, that on the afternoon of the 7th the President gave a formal reception, his first one, to the diplomatic corps,—a protracted ceremonial. After its conclusion there would not have been time before dinner, which then came at an early hour in Washington,—that is, about six,—for such a conference as the diarist pretends to describe. Again, he substitutes blanks for names; and this eighteen years after the date, when the prominent actors, long since dead, could not be compromised by publicity. The suppression of names is an obvious mode of securing a fictitious narrative against detection.

In 1886, seven years after it appeared, I undertook to test the "Diary" as well as I could. I found only one person living with whom its writer described an interview,—indeed, I think the only person named in that way who was living when the "Diary" appeared; and it is not unlikely, as that one had retired from active life, that the diarist thought him dead also. This was Hiram Barney,¹ who became, a few weeks after the reported interview with him, Collector of the Port of New York. I had become intimate with Mr. Barney as early as 1856, having formed an acquaintance with him still earlier. He lived till May 18th of last year. The Diary reports a conversation with him February 20, 1861, just after he had come from a breakfast at Moses H. Grinnell's, given to Mr. Lincoln, who was then on his way to Washington. The break-

¹ Diary, etc., pp. 137, 138.

fast did indeed take place, and is mentioned the next day in the "New York Tribune," with the names of several of the guests; but Mr. Barney is not named in the list, and in fact did not attend, contrary to the statement of the "Diary." In answer to my inquiry as to his presence and the conversation alleged to have taken place immediately after, he replied, October 5, 1886:—

"I recollect the article in the 'N. A. Review' to which you refer,— 'Diary of a Public Man'; and as I could not recollect his interview with me to which he refers, was anxious at the time to know who he was. I applied to Appleton & Co., the publishers, but they could not or would not inform me. I do not think that his statement, so far as it regards my calling upon him at his hotel, or the breakfast at Grinnell's, or Mr. Lincoln, had a particle of truth in it. There was no such breakfast, and no such interview, and no such statements, and probably the author was a romancer. If you should ever find out who the author was, I wish you would tell me."

I replied promptly to Mr. Barney that there was a breakfast at Grinnell's, repeating the names of guests mentioned in the "Tribune"; and he answered, October 7:—

"I have yours of the 6th. I am sure that I did not attend the breakfast at Grinnell's Feb. 20, '61. It was not such a gathering as at that time I would probably be invited to or would care to attend. There are some of my special friends in the list, such as Charles H. Marshall, H. Fish, and T. Tileston; there are others, such as John J. Astor, John A. Stevens, Aspinwall, and Minturn, with whom I was on friendly terms enough, but not very intimate; then there were others with whom I was never on any terms of cordiality. It was, with few exceptions, a Seward crowd; and such people were wholly unsympathetic with me. I may have heard of the breakfast at the time, and it now seems probable that it really occurred; but it does not seem possible that I called on the writer in the 'N. A. Review,' whoever he was, and had with him any conversation, certainly not the conversation which he reports. I have tried to find out the writer, but *stat nominis umbra* in spite of all my efforts to uncover him. I do not even suspect who he may be."

It is not difficult to explain all this. The "romancer," as Mr. Barney calls him, knew from the public journals that there was a breakfast at Mr. Grinnell's; he imagined that Mr. Barney, as a friend of Lincoln and Chase, was likely to have been

one of the guests; he supposed, in 1879, that Mr. Barney, who had passed out of sight, was no longer living to dispute his statement, and that it was therefore safe to put into his mouth any words he pleased. As the facts now appear, the "Diary of a Public Man" must be regarded as a fiction,—nothing more nor less.

The reading of Mr. Pierce's paper was followed by an informal discussion, in which Messrs. GEORGE S. HALE, JUSTIN WINSOR, WILLIAM EVERETT, BARRETT WENDELL, WILLIAM W. GOODWIN, SAMUEL A. GREEN, SAMUEL F. MCCLEARY, and ALBERT B. HART took part.

Mr. ALBERT B. HART communicated an original autobiographical letter written by General William Chamberlin, of Peacham, Vermont. General Chamberlin was born in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, April 27, 1755. This outline of his earlier life was written in his seventy-second year, about eighteen months previous to his death, and was left unfinished. It may be interesting to the reader of the following pages to know something of his later life. After his removal to Vermont in 1780, he retained his connection with military affairs, and five commissions are still extant, the latest of which is dated October, 1799, appointing him Major-General of the State forces. General Chamberlin was also prominent in civil affairs, holding many offices, some of which were as follows: Justice of the Peace twenty-four years; a member of the State Legislature twelve years; Chief Justice of Caledonia County seventeen years; Councillor of the State seven years; Lieutenant-Governor from 1813 to 1815; a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, 1791; Presidential elector in 1800; and a member of Congress, 1803–1805 and 1809–1811. He died September 27, 1828. In private life his biographer states: "He was upright; a friend of order, learning, and religion. Any one who visits his tombstone in a quiet country cemetery in sight of the White Mountains of New Hampshire would be impressed with the fact that his friends were less modest than he had been, before they had finished reading the long list of virtues that are now clear and distinct on the old stone table that covers his grave."¹

¹ Records of the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont, by E. P. Walton, vol. iv. p. 105.

The son to whom this biographical account was addressed, Mellen Chamberlin, at that time a lawyer in Castine, Maine, was later a companion of Professor Morse in a trip to Europe, and was drowned in the Danube, May, 1839.

The letter is as follows : —

PEACHAM, March 2^d, 1827.

MELLEN CHAMBERLIN.

MY DEAR SON, — In one of your letters to me you mentioned that it would be a matter of gratification to you to see some sketches of my own history, and, having but little buisness on my hands, I have thought, upon reflection, that taking a retrospective view of the various scenes through which I have passed might not be unprofitable to myself or altogether uninteresting to you or the rest of my children.

In taking a review of my long and eventful life I find very much to censure and very little to approve. You need not therefore expect any splendid accounts of my own atchievements, or anything which would be peculiarly interesting to any but my own family. Yet if by giving you an impartial account of the various incidents which have occured in the course of my past life, you may perhaps learn to shun the rocks and shoals upon which I have been shipwrecked. My infancy like that of most others in the lower walks of life. My father you have heard, though not poor, was not in very affluent circumstances, & was able by dint of industry to bring up a large family in a reputable manner, or, in other words, above meanness and contempt. I had from my earliest recollections a fondness for reading everything that came in my way, & having a very retentive memory of everything I read, I was noticed as studious, and careless of everything else. An instance of this, to my great mortification, occured when I was about nine or ten years of age. Being at my uncle Joseph Mellen's, with whom I lived, or with my grandfather Mellen,¹ a considerable part of the time, they sent me to the pasture to get a yoke of oxen through a pair of bars which had all been taken out exept one of the upper rails. Being charged to go quick, I went as fast as I could, but, falling into a deep study about something which then struck my mind, with my eyes on the ground, I ran my nose against the upper rail, which bruised it very badley, & knocked me down backwards. This being done in sight of a number were looking on, occasiond a great laugh at my expense, which hurt my feelings much worse than my wounded nose. My love of books however continued, although I had but very few to read except the Bible and some old books on Divinity of which I have much reason to regret that I have not mad[e] a better or more practical improvement.

¹ Deacon Henry Mellen, of Hopkinton, Mass.

I had no opportunity for s[c]hooling more than two months in the year, but made good proficiency in reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. When I was at the age of twelve years, my oldest brother Samuel was taken sick with a fever of the typhus kind in the month of September, and lay a number of weeks in a very distressing condition both in body and mind.

About the 1st of November my eldest sister was taken down with the same disorder, and after languishing twenty days, decesed on the 21st of that month, being in the year 1767. Soon after my brother Moses was seized with the fever, and lay for a long time apparently at the point of death. My mother in the mean time took the fever, and my father, who through the whole time previous had watched his distressed family with unremitting care and attention, was taken violently with the same disease, and having been worn down with fatigue and anxiety of mind, he soon became delirious, and little hopes were entertained of his recovery for a long time. Thirty days his fever continued unabated, and then began to abate slowly. He recovered strength, but his delirium continued untill he was able to walk about. This terrible fever continued to rage in the family from the fore part of September untill March. All except myself who continued at home had it severely. My sisters Sibel¹ and Betey were removed to their uncle Jacob Chamberlin soon after the family became sick, and escaped the disorder. This distressing sickness had a considerable effect upon my mind, and caused me to pray earnestly that I might be delivered from it. After my father and the family had recovered from the fever, my mother at the birth of my sister Patty was very sick; her life was for a considerable time despaired off, but she at length recovered, though always feeble & complaining. The year following, 1768, my father, finding himself embarrassed by the long & severe sickness, — the doc^r bills were large, and other expenses of nurses and hired help amounted to large sums, and the creditors were in want of payment. In this situation he had no other resource but to leave the management of the farm to the care of my brother Sam^l & Moses,² except in hay-time and harvest, & having a number of lots of cedar timber in the swamps at Hopkinton from which shingles were made, he took me with him into the swamps for a great part of the time for two or three years; & day after day and month after month I was doomed to follow him as soon as it was daylight in the morning, sometimes two and at others 3 miles to the swamps, and to return in the evening, frequently after dark; and although he was always kind and willing to take every burden on himself to relieve me that was possible, yet his rapid movements in

¹ Sibel married Capt. John Eastman of Concord, New Hampshire, a soldier of the Revolutionary War.

² Moses, grandfather of Judge Mellen Chamberlain, of Chelsea, Massachusetts.

going and returning morning & evening kept me on the trot behind him, and many a hearty spell of crying I had when looking back he would call me, "Come, Billy." Tired of this kind of life, I looked forward with the pleasing but delusive hope that my uncle Joseph Mellen, who had no children and a pretty large estate, would take me home and give me an education, as he had frequently intimated he should do; but in this hope I was grievously disappointed by the sudden death of this favorite uncle, who was suddenly seized with a disorder in his head which produced a high delirium and carried him off in a few hours. As he died inte[s]tate, his estate was divided between his ten brothers & sisters, and my hopes from this quarter were entirely frustrated. I did not, however, relinquish the hope of obtain[ing] an education by some means or other, although I knew that my father was unable to give me the necessary means of obtaining it. But I had procured some Latin books, and committed them to memory with great rapidity, and a Mr. Hutchinson, the father of the present Judge Hutchinson, offered to take me and fit me for college if my father would let me go, and I might work for him to pay my tuition, and I flattered myself that my father in a year or two would give me my time, and that I could work half my time and prepare myself for college as soon as other students who devoted their whole time to study, and in this way accomplish the object I had so much at heart. But in the year 1772 my father took a journey to Concord, in New Hampshire, on a visit to his friends there; & he was persuaded by Capt. Eastman to purchase a tract of land in Loudon, which he did in company with my uncle John Chamberlin, and in the summer of 1772¹ my father sent my brother Sam^l and myself, with my uncle John Chamberlin, who had previously sold his farm, to work on the land. We cleared up and sowed a field of wheat, and returned to Hopkinton. My father and my uncle during this period had made a bargain by which my uncle took my father's farm and my father the land in Loudon, amounting to about six hundred acres, and moved from Hopkinton to that place in March, 1774. During the period between 1770 & 1774 the dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies was becoming very serious and threa[t]ning. General Gage, about the year 1770, was appointed Governor of Massachusetts, and had a considerable body of troops under his command stationed in the town of Boston.² A number of boys and others collected in the streets with some kind of pageantry, which was offensive to the British officers. A Captain Preston, at the head of a military band, fired on the promiscuous croud, and killed five persons and wounded a number of others. This massacre, as it was called, rekindled the flame which had

¹ Written 1872 in the manuscript.

² Gage was not appointed Governor until 1774, four years after the "massacre."

for some time been smothered after the repeal of the Stamp Act. The newspapers now teemed with publications tending to alarm the public mind, & to arouse the people to open resistance to these wanton acts of aggression. Essays on the rights of man and of Englishmen, in which the right of the British Parliament to tax the Colonies without their consent was denied, the people were called on to defend their natural and inalienable rights against the encroachments of lawless power. The militia were formed into volunteer companies of minute men, as they were called, ready to appear in the field at a moment's warning, to defend their bretheren against future attacks. Committees of correspondence, inspection, and safety were appointed, and every measure in the power of the people taken to defend their rights. This state of things continued until the 19th of April, 1775, when the attempt of the British forces to destroy the military stores at Concord belonging to the Province terminated in open war. During the period from 1770 to 1775, — that is, from the 15th to the 20th year of my age, — I read with deep interest and feeling all the essays in newspapers and pamphlets in which the natural rights and dutys of man in society were explained and vindicated, and in which the act of the British Parliament de[c]lar- ing their right to bind the Colonies by their legislative acts in all cases whatsoever were denounced as arbitrary & tyrannical, repugnant to every principle of natural or civil liberty. Having, like most other young men of thought, imbibed the most enthusiastic ideas of liberty and the rights of man, I was prepared in my feelings to engage with ardour in the contest. Although from my father's moving as he did from Massachusetts at the time he did, I had never been enrolled to do duty in the militia, & I was for the first time called upon on the 21 day of April, two days after the Battle of Lexington, to take arms as a soldier. A Mr. Magoon, who was a sergeant at that time in the comp^y at Loudon, rode up to my father's door in the dead of night, and knocked with great violence, and demanded to know if Willam Chamberlin was there. On being answered in the affirmative, he said in a very audible voice, "I warn him to appear to-morrow morning at the place of parade compleat in arms and ammu[ni]tion, to march and (as he expressd it) to defend our enemies [*sic*]." He then informed us that an express had arrived with the news that the British troops had penetrated into the country in great force, and were burning and butchering all before them; that they had got up as far as Sandown, in New Hampshire. Orders were to march immediately to meet them. In consequence of this horrid news, the remainder of the night was spent in equipping me for the march, and in the morning I swung my pack and took my leave of the family, but not without some dismal forebodings that I should never return, which I concealed as much as possible from my anxious friends. But having to march for two miles alone through a piece of dark pine woods before I joined any company, I could not help reflect-

ing on the horrid news I had heard, and on the doubtful issue of the contest, & that if I should not be killed in battle, that those who had taken up arms, if overcome, would be executed for treason. It operated as a damper to my courage, and brot me to a full halt for a moment : but reflecting again on the gross injustice of the claim of the British government in asserting that they had a right to bind the Colonies in all cases whatsoever without our being represented in their Parliament ; that this claim, if admitted, not only extended to our property but to our persons and everything dear or valuable ; that life under such circumstances or conditions was hardly worth preserving, and that I, being at a proper age for a soldier and nothing to prevent me from engaging as such, that it would be mean and pusillanimous in me to decline the contest, — I therefore dried up the gush of tears I had involuntarily shed, and marched on and joined the company with a tolerable good grace. But on the morning of the second day news reached us that the British troops had retreated back to Boston ; and on hearing this we returned home. But orders were immediately issued and officers appointed to raise recruits for a standing army for eight months. Capt. Jeremiah Clough, who was recruiting a company, solicited my brother Sam^l and myself to join the company. My brother Samuel was very anxious to go as Orderly Sergeant, being promised that place if he would enlist ; but having been just married, and moved away his wife from all her friends, he could not think of leaving her alone for the whole term. Upon which, Col^o Clough agreed with him and me that if he would join the army for six weeks, I might come down at the end of that time, & he would release him, & I should take his place as Orderly Serg^t. He accordingly enlisted, and I went on to take his place at the time stipulated. Clough, however, refused to release my brother unless I would enlist as a private, alledging that I was too young to be appointed to that office over men who were as old as my father. But he had a brother in the comp^y who was just my age whom he appointed a Sergeant who could not write, and I was compelled to enlist upon condition that I was to be exempted from other duty to do the writing for the comp^y. I continued through the campaign to do the writing and all the dutys of Orderly Ser^{gt} untill the last six weeks, so far as making out the returns, receiving the orders and all the necessary writings, when the person who claimed the rank of Orderly Serg^t very modestly hinted to me that, as I was exempted from ordinary duty & had an easy time of it, that it [would] be very proper for me, when it came to his turn to cook for the mess, that I should cook for him. Although I had frequently done this voluntarily and unasked, yet when it came to be enjoined on me as a matter of right, it wounded my pride ; I told him I was never made to be a waiter to a sergeant. Upon this, he threatened to call me out on the Piquet Guard unless I

complied, but on my refusal he called me out the next day for that guard. I turned out the first man, & though in truth I spent the night very uncomfortably, yet on being asked when I returned by the Serg^t how I liked the Piquet Guard, I told him, "Very well." He then informed me that if I would continue to do the writing, he would call me on guard no more. I told him I would see him in Purgatory before I would put pen to paper for him again. From this time to the end of the campaign I experienced every degree of persecution which petty tyranny, limited as it is in the army, could inflict, both from the captain & his junto. But a few days before campaign closed, the Captain and this Sergeant had taken listing orders, & were to have commissions if they could enlist companies for the next campaign. A few days before the campaign closed Gen^l Lee and Sullivan paraded the troops daily, & haranged them on the necessity of engaging in the service another year. Their eloquent appeals to their patriotism to induce them not to desert the cause and leave the forts naked and their country exposed to the ravages of an infuriated enemy, prevailed on many to turn out of their ranks and shew themselves ready to enlist under such officers as they might afterwards select. I at that time took orders and enlisted six or seven men out of Capt. Clough's company, and the day before our time expired Clough came to me, and in a very flattering manner said, "Chamberlin, I observed you turned out as a volunteer for the next campaign. I presume you wont leave my company; I should like to have you continue in it." I told him I should consider of it. The next morning, however, I paraded the men whom I had enlisted, and marched them back and forward before his tent 2 or three times, and marched them off in triumph to Col^o Stark's regiment, to the great mortification of M^r Clough, as the men which I had enlisted were most of them from the town of Canterbury, to which Capt. Clough belonged. We continued at Winter Hill untill the 18th of March, 1776, when the British evacuated the town of Boston, & on the 19th or 20th marched for Norwich in Connecticut, tarried there two days, and marched for New London, and embarked on board of sloops for New York. After sailing part of the way up the Sound, the wind shifted and blew ahead so strong we could not proceed, and we lay tossing and rolling two or three days, and were at length driven back into New London. We had at this time four companies, consisting of about 280 men on board the sloop on which I was, and being all or nearly all land lubbers, were in the most distressing seasickness the whole time. There was no eating, drinking, or sleeping, but the violent tossing of the vessel kept up as violent a pukeing, untill some seemed almost willing to be cast overboard. But after landing in New London, and continuing an hour or two, the wind shifting, we reimbarked, and landed in

New York the next morning, March 29th. There we passed the time very agreeably untill the 29th day of April, when six regiments were ordered to Canada,—Stark's, Poor's, Greaton, Nixon's, Read's, and one other. We embarked in sloops for Albany, but being retarded by contrary winds, were 7 days on the passage. The latter part of the journey we left the sloop and marched on foot to Albany, tarried at Albany several days, and marched for Lake George, and embar[k]ed on board batteaux for Ticonderoga; here we tarried one or two days, and embarked for St. John's; landed at Crown Point, but tarried but an hour: we again embarked with a strong south wind, our course being northward. We sailed at a great rate for an hour or two, when the wind became boisterous; the waves were so high that forward boats were only to be seen when both were on the swell. Part of the company put ashore and encamped. Ours at length put ashore, where we lay two days on the western side of the lake. After stopping at several points and islands, we landed at St. John's on the 29th day of May, 1776. As soon as we had landed news reached us that the American fort at the Cedars on the S^t Lawrence was attacked, and volunteers were called for to march immediately for their relief. We marched the next morning for La Prairie, where we met our friends who had been captured or rather capitulated by giving up the fort on condition of their being permitted to return on parole as non-combatants for one year. They were, however, stripped almost naked by the Indians, and of every thing valuable about them.

We were then ordered across the S^t Lawrence to Montreal, and continued there two weeks; the small-pox being prevalent everywhere in the city and among the troops, we tho't it useless to try to avoid it. I observed myself the most severe regimen, abstaining from eating anything that contained grease or salt, & lived wholly on milk and water porridge & bread. This dieting was continued after we had left Montreal, and was ordered to Sorrell. After tarrying there two days, Burgoy[n]'s armada hove in sight, and we were obliged to retreat with the utmost rapidity day and night untill we arrived at Chambly Fort. In this fort a large quantity of provisions and ordnance stores had been deposited, which rendered it necessary, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy, to destroy all that we could not carry with us. But while troops were engaged in loading and towing up the boats up the falls, a large party which had been detached on another service made their appearance, and marched rapidly around the bason of Chambly towards us, which were mistaken for a party of the enemy. The troops were immediately formed to receive them, and a battle was expected, but on their nearer approach they proved to be a part of our own retreating army.

The surprise being over, the boats were loaded as deep as they could

swim with provisions and ordnance, and the fort set on fire. Every commissioned officer in the company to which I belonged had been innoculated for the small-pox, and had previously left the company for the Island Aux, and the immediate command of course devolved on me. With the assistance of four or five men I towed up two batteaux up Chambly Falls. The men went on the shore or bank of the river with a long painter or rope, and one stood in the boat with a setting pole to keep it off the bank. We arrived at St. John's just as the sun sett, and I was ordered immediately to the Island Aux. While at St John's, Gen^l, then Col^o Hazen had a large house on the opposite side of the river, which he orderd to be set on fire, and it was bur[n]ing when I left the place. We rowed up the river towards the island untill the darkness of a foggy night prevented our further progress. We landed on a point, but dared not make a fire for fear of discovery by the enemy. As soon as daylight appeard we again took to our oars, and landed at the island. When we arrived we found the island coverd with the people sick with the small-pox in its various stages, and there was no possibility of escaping the contagion; and although the officers, the whole of them in the comp^y to which I belonged, had previously been innoculated and left the comp^y for the island, yet it was not permitted to soldiers to innoculate. I took some of the infection, made an incision in my own arm with my knife, and we proceeded up the lake for Crown Point with a number of patients in the same boat, one of whom was blind with the disorder, and two or three afterwards died. Believing, as we then did, that the only method we could take to prevent the fatal effects of the disorder was to avoid eating any thing greasy or salt, although I had been upon the starving regimen for a month, I still continued it, although we had nothing provided for subsistence but salt pork and flour; there being no inhabitants at that time on the lake, it was impossible to get any other supplies, either of food or physic. I happend while at Montreal to have got some tea, but without any sweetening. I lived on this tea boiled in an open-topped tin kettle, and a cake baked on a chip made of flour, untill in about five days of hard rowing we arrived at Crown Point, or rather at Chimney Point directly opposite. Here was a scene of suffering not easy to be described, The whole of the retreating army who had not previously had the small-pox, of which there were but a very small number, not more than two in our com^y, were taken down at once with this disorder, destitute of suitable food or medicine, encamped in a tow tent on the cold ground, without any to nurse or provide for them. I was not myself, however, so sick but that I crossed the lake every other day, and drew provision for the comp^y and served it out. Although at several times my eyesight left me, and I fell down while travelling about in a kind of swoon or fainting fit, and when the news of the Declaration of Independence

reached us in the papers, my sight was so injured by the disorder that I was unable to read it more than two minutes at a time, and several of my companions entirely lost the sight of one or both their eyes. In this situation, had the British persued us immediately, little or no resistance could have been made by us, and the whole northern army must have fallen an easy prey. After recovering in some measure from this epidemic, we retreated to Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, where a stand was made and the army was reinforced by the militia of the neighbouring States. My recovery was very slow, & the health of the troops generally was far from being good. The lake air and water was very unhealthy, and the militia from Massachusetts, New Hampshire died in great numbers. From 76 men who landed at St John's, our company, on the 29 of May, 23 were dead before the 16th of November. Some time in the latter part of Aug^t or the first of September, while lingering under the effects of the climate and bad water, Serg^t Spring, now Capt. Seth Spring of Saco, Maine, and myself made an excursion across the lake, and procured some boughs of spruce with a view to make some spruce beer. We gathered a quantity of indianroot or spicknard, and with two q^{ts} of mollasses made a barrell of beer, which proved to be very good; but before we had drank up and given away the first barrell, we made another, and we sold the 2^d barrell by the mug, as every one who had drank of it was calling for more. Finding it to be in good demand, we concluded to persue the buisness. Spring was despatched to Fort George and bought two barrells of molosses, and as my duty required me always to be in camp, I hired the soldiers to bring water to my hut, procured spruce and spicknard, and with a kettle which held about 4 or 5 gallons, I boiled my spruce and roots, filld my barrells with cold water, and mixing this warm liquid with the mollosses, we produced a barrell of excellent beer, which we sold as fast as we could make for three dollars a barrell. This not only recruited my own health, but the health of almost all who used it. We made and sold from three to five barrels per diem, and at the end of six or seven weeks Spring and myself divided 300 dollars, which we had cleared by the buisness. By this time many others had engaged in the brewing, and in this way the army was generally supplied with beer, instead of bad water, which greatly recruited the emaciated army, & tended to set them on their legs. But the commanding officers thinking that the brewers made too much profit, they undertook to regulate them by appointing inspectors, & stipulating the price at which it should be sold. This, like all other attempts to regulate prices by law, did not succeed, the price being fixed so low that the brewers could make nothing by their labor, the whole was discontinued. This supply of cash operated very much in our favor. It enabled us not only to

supply ourselves with comfortable subsistence while on our march to Pennsylvania, but to purchase us horses to ride home after our time had expired; & I have reason to believe that had it not been for this fortunate circumstance I should never have reached home. On the 16th day of Nov., about six weeks before our time was out, when we were about 120 miles from home, expecting soon to return to my friends, from whom I had been absent almost two years, we were ordered to march to Fort George at the south end of that lake, where we tarried about a week. From thence we were ordered to Albany, tarried several days, rec^d two months pay, and expected every day to be dismissed; but, to our great disappointment, on the 3^d day of December we were ordered aboard some Albany sloops to go down the Hudson to Kinston. We were crouded into a small sloop, the hold of which was half filled with rails, so that no person could stand upright. The weather being cold and boisterous, it was necessary to croud into the hold or pass the whole night on the deck. To get out of the croud I crawled forward to the bow of the vessel, and seated myself with my back against it; but the hold was soon crouded, and a row of men seated on my legs and leaning back against my body, some drunk, others spewing, others fighting and kicking those who trod upon them, so that there was no possibility of retreating from my station. Here I was compelled to pass the night without closing my eyes in worse than Egyptian darkness, amidst the stench of bilge water, drunken breaths, fighting, cursing, and prophaness, and suffered more for the same space of time than in any period of my life; and had I been awaked from sleep without knowing how I came there, I should surely have tho't myself in the infernal regions. We landed at Kingston the next day, & passed the [there?] a day or two very pleasantly among the Dutch inhabitants of Esopus. Were then ordered to march through West Jersey to Pennsylvania, the ground being frozen, our cloaths worn threadbare and many of them to rags, our shoes scarcely sufficient to keep our feet from the frozen ground without wrapping them in rags, the allowance of provision being poor, fresh beef without salt to season it. As I had money, I lived upon it without tasting the government allowance. We arrived at Newtown in Pennsylvania on the 20th or twenty-first of December, four days before the battle of Trenton. On the 25th, Christmas morning, we were paraded, and kept the field untill sunsett, when we marched for Trenton, distant 18 miles. We reached the river nine miles above Trenton, where we crossed. The anchor ice in the river so obstructed the boats that we were a long time in crossing. Marched about two o'clock for Trenton with the most profound silence. Just before sunrise our advance guard was fired on by the advanced guard of the enemy, and the battle soon commenced which lasted but a few minutes. The enemy surrendered in a body to the amount of 919 in number. I

was near the gen^l when he took possession of the standard of the enemy.

Being one of a party who went in pursuit of the party who escaped, I neither went into a house nor took any refreshment. When we got back into the town, the rear guard was just passing out with the prisoners in front of the whole. From the time we left the river the preceeding night it began to snow, and continued to snow moderately untill the attack was made; but soon after it began to rain. I had got thoroughly wet before we began our retrograde march, and the rain and half-melted snow and water was almost over shoes — our feet was drenched in water at every step. I was seized with a kind of ague fit, which lasted for half an hour. I went into an house with my teeth chattering in my head, but though my kind host made a good fire and did everything to favor me, the fire failed to warm me for some time, and I expected to have been taken down with a violent fever. After a while, however, I got warm, and made shift to get back to the ferry; here we had to stand by the river untill the prisoners were first got over. The wind by this time had shifted, and blew a keen northwestern blast which chilled me to the heart. I at length went into an house at some distance from the ferry, where was a girl which was called Miss Chamberlin. On the score of namesake I ventured to scrape acquaintance with her, and by her assistance I got a bowl of warm, fresh meat broth, which was of great service to me. I then went down to the river to wait for the boats. The ice was so thick near the shore as to bear for a rod or two. I went on the ice with a view to jump in, but it broke and let me into the river up to my waste, and the boat was filled before I could recover myself. The next boat, however, that struck I waded into the river to meet it, threw my gun into it, made leap with all my strength. I got in, and got over to a fire, but almost dead with cold and fatigue. When we got back to Newtown to headquarters, we had to shift for ourselves. The remains of our company, consisting of five or six besides myself, went back about a mile to a Dutch house, and hired a room for a week and our board untill the last day of Dec^r. I then went to the quarters of Gen. Stark, and requested a discharge for myself and men. He told me he had no orders to give a discharge, but expected he should have orders in a day or two, and we must wait. I told him that I and some others had bought horses and were there upon expense, and wished to be off the next day. He said we must wait a day or two, as he could give no discharges untill orders arrived. Finding ourselves under the neces[si]ty of waiting, Spring and one or two others, with myself, took horses and rode to Philadelphia to see this famous city, thinking we should never have another opportunity. We were absent two or three days, and when we returned the whole army had moved across the river, and left no one there that we knew, or that had any

knowledge of us. We understood that guards were place[d] at all the ferrys on the river, and no one was permitted to pass without orders.

In this situation we concluded to ride up the river untill we got above the guards. As we mounted our horses on the morning of the 3^d of Jan^y, 1777; we heard the firing both of small arms and of cannon at the battle of Princet^{on}. We rode up the Delaware that day, and was informed that we could pass the next morning at ferry above, where there was no guards. We proceeded next morning before breakfast to this ferry; but when we arrived we found a subaltern's guard had taken possession, with orders to permit no one to cross without a pass. In this delima we had recourse to a measure which has made me tremble every time I thought of it; which, though there was no moral evil in the act, was altogether unjustifiable, if we had been detected before we could have seen Col^o Stark, who we knew would recognize it, yet we run a great risque, & we ought not to have done as we did. After taking breakfast at a tavern by the ferry, we called on the officer & showed him our pass, and he ordered us into the boat; but before we had got half way over the river the rest of our comp^y hove in sight which were travelling home on foot. We had parted with them the day before. When they saw us in the boat they came running, and beconing to us to stop. We as zealously beconed them to keep back and not expose us, as they knew we had no pass. The boatmen however kept on, and landed us on the Jersey shore; and you may presume we did not loitre long on the bank, & we were not afterward interrupted on our return home. Having got tired of the army, in the spring following purchased a hundred acres of land and went to work. I turned out a pair of young cattle which I had raised before I went to the army, and about 80 dollars, which I had saved while in the service, although my wages, and thirty or forty dollars besides, had been necessarily expended while in the service. I continued to work on the land I had purchased untill July, when the report of Gen^l St. Clair's defeat at Ticonderoga reached us, and the State of New Hampshire ordered Genl. Stark's brigade to march to Vermont in defence of the frontiers. This brigade was composed of volunteers, & by the persuasion of Capt. Scias, who commanded a comp^y of millitia in Loudon at that time, I turned out as one. Here I retained my old berth of orderly serg^t, but when we arrived at Manchester, where we tarried about a week, I did the duty of adjutant to Col^o Stickney's reg^t untill the adjutant of the millitia arrived, & was then appointed ser^t-major, but declined serving after the battle of Bennington. The quarter master was wounded and went home, and I was appointed q^r master the rest of the campaign, which was but a short time. Of course I was not commissioned.

The Hon. Mellen Chamberlain said that he had long been familiar with this letter, and that he regarded it as of considerable interest and value. He hoped it would be carefully studied by persons dealing with the events which it describes.

Since the meeting Judge Chamberlain has kindly furnished some further extracts from General Chamberlin's manuscripts, which were copied by him many years ago, and are here inserted:—

As the anniversary of the Battle of Bennington draws near, which happened on the 16th of August, 1777,—a day memorable in the annals of our Revolution,—and has been frequently celebrated as a day which was ever to be had in grateful remembrance by the inhabitants of this State, more especially by the western counties, for this signal interposition of Providence in their favor.

The victory obtained that day gave an effectual check to the ravages of an infuriated enemy, who, flushed with victory in the conquest of Ticonderoga, were marauding through the counties of Rutland and Addison, and driving the few inhabitants from their homes and plundering them of all their effects. General Burgoyne, at the head of eight or ten thousand troops, had already penetrated into the State of New York as far as Saratoga, on the Hudson, from whence he detached a body of troops, Germans, British, and Tories, and Indians, with orders to proceed to Manchester in this State, thence across the mountains to Rockingham, on Connecticut River, thence down the river to Brattleborough, and thence by the most direct route on the great road to Albany. These orders were found in the orderly book of the major of brigade, and came into the hands of the writer, being picked up on the field of battle after the officers were killed to whom it belonged. By these orders Gen^l Burgoyne explains to Col. Baum, the commander of the detachment, the object he had in view in the following words, viz.: "The object of your expedition is to try the affections of the country, to mount the Redeisel's dragoons, and to obtain large supplies of cattle, horses, and carriages. The number of horses you are to obtain must be at least 1,300." He then gives the direction for the remainder of the route as above. Thus confident was the British general of subjugating the country, and of meeting the southern British Army from New York in a few days after issuing these orders. But the victory at Bennington, though not in itself decisive, nor of great importance, yet it not only gave a complete check to the towering hopes and the depredations of the enemy, but it gave fresh courage and spirit to the militia of our almost desponding country, and caused them to rally round the standard of standing army in such numbers as to effect the capture of the whole northern army of the enemy, and secured

to the northern States an exemption from the further attacks of the enemy.

The following doggerel lines descriptive of this battle were composed and [?] a day or two after by one of the actors in this scene, as a counter-part to the vaunting British song describing the Battle of Bunker Hill. This British song was sung frequently with great glee and triumph by Tories and British agents, even in the environs of the American camp but just before the battle, in ridicule of the Yankees, to the tune of Yankee Doodle, and the following was composed and sung to the same tune by one who was an actor in the scene a day or two after the battle.

Battle of Bennington Described. A Song.

On the 16th day of August last,
'T was early in the morning,
To hold ourselves in readiness
Bold Stark he gave us warning.
By six o'clock an order came
An order for our marching
To meet our foes in their stronghold,
To rout and to dislodge them.

Chorus.

Sing Yankee Doodle's victory,
Sing Yankee Doodle Dandy.
See the Britons flee,
From Yankees see the British flee;
They left their kits quite handy.

A disposition then was form'd
To attack them on each quarter,
And men with heroic ard[or] warm'd
Rush'd on to blood and slaughter;
For although the cannons loud did roar
And the grape shot flew like hailstones,
We storm'd their works and made them fly
And quit their former stations.

Sing Yankee, &c.

Brave Col^o Nichols on the right
Behaved very gallant,
And Col^o Stickney on the left
Display'd his martial talents;
For through a hot incessant fire
Both from small arms & cannon
We rushed on and forced them
The ground for to abandon.

Sing Yankee, &c.

Seven hundred prisoners with their arms,
Baggage, and ammunition,
Then fell into our conquering hands
And made a full submission.
Besides upon the battle ground,
Slain in this mortal duel,
Two hundred carcasses we found,
The prey of death so cruel.

Sing Yankee Doodle's victory, &c.

But while our soldiers busied were
Securing prisoners taken,
They being strongly reenforc'd,
We found them towards us making.
Brave Warner then with corps reserve
Gave them a warm reception,
And quickly made them retrograde
With great precipitation.

Chorus.

Sing Yankee Doodle's victory,
Sing Yankee Doodle Dandy.
From Yankee Doodles Britons flee;
We see them make the sand fly.

But Night her sable curtain spread,
And our pursuit prevented,
Or otherwise we sure had made
Their coward hearts relented;
For had bright Sol delayed his race
And shin'd an hour longer,
We'd taken and kill'd them in the chace
Had they been three times stronger.

Sing Yankee Doodle's victory, &c.

New Hampshire boys this victory won,
Which does them lasting honour,
Commanded by Gen'l Stark
And the intrepid Col^o Warner.
And sure we'll [?] for liberty
With How or Alexander,
And never fear the face of clay,
If Stark be our commander.

And now my verse is nearly clos'd;
And to conclude my story,
'Twas Heaven that kindly interpos'd,
And crown'd the day with glory.

Our officers and men all fought
With bravery and spirit ;
Their active services that day
Immortal honors merit.

Chorus.

Mr. JOSIAH P. QUINCY communicated the memoir of the late Rev. Octavius B. Frothingham, which he had been appointed to prepare for publication in the Proceedings.

A new serial was on the table for distribution, containing the proceedings at the January and February meetings.



Yours sincerely

J.B. Frothingham

M E M O I R
OF
OCTAVIUS BROOKS FROTHINGHAM,
BY J. P. QUINCY.

MORE than half a century ago, the writer of this Memoir, then a school-boy, was present in the King's Chapel on a certain Sunday when Dr. N. L. Frothingham ascended the narrow stairway that leads from the reading-desk to the pulpit. He was a preacher who always compelled attention by a sumptuousness of manner as well as by the fresh force that he frequently struck into familiar language. If his speech occasionally ran into the over-emphasis of the elocutionist, it was to him a natural utterance, and at times gave familiar words a felicitous lift to a higher plane of meaning. There are petitions in the Litany of which I can feel the full force only by remembering how Dr. Frothingham used to read them. On the Sunday referred to, the preacher announced one of those out-of-the-way texts that he was fond of selecting: *The Lord shut him in*. To few readers of the Biblical account of the deluge will this statement present itself as one of those five-word-long jewels of whose perennial sparkle the poet assures us; but the emphasis upon the second word, and the sudden springing of the bolt that was suggested by the rapid, metallic utterance of those that followed it, left a ringing in my ears that is yet distinct. The sermon which followed is irrecoverable from the subliminal consciousness held by modern psychology to be the capacious waste-basket of lapsed sensations. But what might well have been the purport of a discourse preached from that scripture to the King's Chapel congregation of the day, easily suggests itself. It might have been a reminder that we were shut in, doubtless by divine appoint-

ment, to a very limited field of responsibility, and that our duty consisted in cultivating whatever was graceful, beautiful, and of good report within that contracted area. Members of the sect to which Dr. Frothingham belonged were then the leading influences in cultivated Boston society, which was not surpassed in propriety, refinement, and intellect by any society in the world. These prominent men deserved whatever encomium is conferred by the familiar term "Christian gentlemen," — and it is scarcely worth while to recollect that the substantive sometimes limits the adjective, or that the expression would be decidedly inadequate if applied to Paul or Augustine, to Latimer or Wesley.

"All this, brother, and Heaven too!" was the exclamation of one of these genial Boston divines upon entering the exquisitely appointed library of a fellow-minister. And why not? All seemed stable and quiet; the Whig party, with Webster for its prophet, if not infallible, could not go far astray; the distant rumble of agitation — whose roar is now forever in our ears — was countenanced by no respectable person, and would soon be quieted. The government of the world, as taught in the home and Sunday-school, accorded more nearly with human notions of propriety than many of us have since found it. The infinitely complex action and reaction of things, involving to our eyes so much indiscriminating cruelty, admitted of a simple and satisfactory explanation. Paley's teleology was then as rational as it is always attractive. Did a frosty night snap one's water-pitcher (the illustration is taken from the sermon of an eminent Unitarian divine), the circumstance "called for an adoring acknowledgment of that all-pervading design which departed from its own method by causing water to expand at the moment of congelation." It is doubtful whether we have gained much by the more Darwinian reflection that the incident might now occasion; a wrench from customary thought is never agreeable, though it may prove ultimately advantageous. No doubt the society in which this honorable phase of Unitarianism was a leading factor had advantages over that which has succeeded it. Knowledge, if limited, was surer, — as there was not so much to be known. There was thorough and repeated reading of the best literature, and time to assimilate it. This resulted in a standard of conversation from which we have grievously

fallen away, and for which the listening to a paper read by a specialist, with a sequent liberty to ask him questions, is no substitute. The family reading on Sunday was the Bible, followed by works of the character of Law's Serious Call or Jeremy Taylor's sermons, with perhaps an allowance of poetry of no lighter character than the *Paradise Lost*; and this has not been profitably exchanged for scattered and unrelated fragments of information that may be picked out of a mammoth newspaper. It remains to be said that the representative men of the sect which then stood for the extreme of liberalism would have been shocked at utterances that have since been heard from the Episcopal pulpit, and doubtless would have considered Cardinal Manning's championship of the London dockers a highly unclerical proceeding. Into such an environment as has been faintly indicated, Octavius Brooks Frothingham, the third son of Nathaniel Langdon Frothingham and his wife Ann Gorham Brooks, was born November 26, 1822; but, as will be seen, he was not shut in by it.

Dr. Frothingham the father was a man of taste and feeling, and a part of all that was best in the city. His son's "*Recollections and Impressions*," published in 1891, give a charming picture of his personality. A delicately organized man, happy in temperament as well as in his clerical occupation, and appreciative of the social position that then went with it. He loved the warmth and color of sentiment, was easily moved by the flow of eloquence and the attractions of a vivid, dramatic style. He was so captivated by the brilliant manner of Macaulay, for example, that he did not care to criticise his philosophy. He read the works of Carlyle with pleasure, though his sympathies were as strongly conservative as were those of his neighbors Ticknor and Prescott, to whom he was bound by all the ties of elegant scholarship. He was universally respected, and passed his uneventful days in a round of ministerial duties which were not so arduous as to deprive him of precious hours in his library in companionship with the great writers of all countries and times.

His mother, in the mind of her son, was associated with the sincerity, kindness, and simplicity that are the best graces of woman. Her household cares — which included the nurture

of seven children, parish calls, and missions among the poor — filled her days. Her religious faith was of the heart, creeds being affairs of criticism with which she did not concern herself. She cared nothing for decoration or display, and was fond of the solid things in furniture, though their fashion had gone by. She had a passion for practical accomplishments, and did a good woman's work in the somewhat contracted sphere to which she was confined.

Short courses of primary instruction fitted young Frothingham for such education as was then furnished at the Boston Latin School. This was no doubt good of its kind, but the kind was grimly classical. One precious year, as I remember, was devoted to memorizing the Latin Grammar, and resulted in the fluent rattling off of long lists of exceptions to its incomprehensible rules. This accomplishment many of us, in after life, would have willingly exchanged for information bearing more directly upon the existence we were to enter upon in the sad, post-classical period wherein our lots had been cast. But the minister's son was apt at his books, and doubtless received from them whatever light they were capable of shedding upon his path. He confesses, however, that the best part of his education came from the atmosphere of elegant literature which surrounded him out of school hours. Ticknor, Prescott, and Hillard were familiar friends of the father, and the advent of still fresher inspiration was suggested by the young law student, Charles Sumner, as he strode along the Boston streets, and by Ralph Waldo Emerson as he radiated his serene ideas at the family dinner-table. A neighbor, Daniel Webster, frequently passed the house, looking like "the embodiment of the Constitution, the incarnation of Law, the black locomotive of the train of civilization."

Then came in natural sequence Harvard College, with its distinguished teaching corps of Longfellow, Felton, Lovering, Peirce, Walker, Beck, and others of inferior note. There were neither athletics nor boating to distract attention from the intellectual pursuits of the place, and Boston was not so temptingly accessible as at present. Physical exercise was generally confined to walking, with an occasional swim in Charles River.

"He was a close and conscientious student," writes a classmate, "and was one of the first eight in the class. But he was far from being a

mere 'dig,' and gave and took his full share of social enjoyment. He sang favorite songs with capital effect, and there were very few genial occasions of the A Δ Φ, or other undergraduate festivities, that he did not set the table in a roar by a ballad called 'Hamlet,' or delighted us more soberly by singing Dickens's song of the 'Ivy Green.' He was bright and cordial in his manners, always greeting you with a smile. This delightful cordiality of demeanor he retained to the last time I saw him."

It had been assumed that young Frothingham would enter the clerical profession. It was a scholarly calling. Men of exceptional ability like Everett, Bancroft, and Palfrey had entered it, and found it a convenient stepping-stone to the wider careers they afterwards adorned. The pulpit still preserved some of the aristocratic aroma that it so abundantly enjoyed in the earlier days of New England. The Divinity School attached to the College was considered unsectarian by those within its enclosure, and something resembling the reverse of this by those who were not. It gave instruction in ecclesiastical history, natural theology, pastoral duty, and the composition of sermons,—but sermons written within the limits of Unitarianism were alone contemplated. Orthodoxy was held to have made its fight and surrendered; but, perhaps out of courtesy to the vanquished, conservative methods of Biblical interpretation were alone countenanced, and the wolf of "free thinking" must do his prowling distinctly on the outside of the sheepfold. Hebrew was the sole language studied,—it being assumed that the long years of school and college so largely devoted to the study of Greek had imparted a knowledge of that tongue which would suffice for the reading of the New Testament. No "experience of religion" was required for admittance to the semi-monastic life of Divinity Hall. Then, as now, there was a weekly prayer-meeting, and the students were cautioned against "excessive intellectualism." The instructors were men of zeal and ability, and the atmosphere of the place was cheerful. The *via media* between the Orthodoxy of Andover and the Rationalism of Germany had been discovered, and nothing remained but to walk therein with steady and grateful steps.

Of his life in the Divinity School I have two notices, both characteristic. This is from Colonel T. W. Higginson:—

"Frothingham and I were not intimate, not being classmates, but I remember that after some discussion at a public meeting, whether Theodore Parker was entitled to the Christian name or not, Frothingham and I met in the woodshed whither we went for our fuel, and I said that I did not see why any one who regarded Jesus Christ as a man should care to call himself by the Christian name; that each man should be content to stand as an individual thinker without a label; upon which he said, 'That is the way I view it; *I am perfectly willing to be called a Frothinghamian.*' This illustrates his character as exhibited even at that time, when he was classed as a conservative. His so-called conservatism was, I think, only a matter of temperamental caution, with no real narrowness and not a trace of worldliness. He was personally intimate with Johnson and Longfellow, who were the radicals of his class, and much the most gifted and cultivated men in it; they called each other by their Christian names, I remember, and he wrote hymns for their Book of Hymns."

The following incident comes from a Christian minister whose life has been spent in efficient work among those most needing the comfort of religious support. He has preferred to write in the third person:—

"In the Divinity School at Cambridge, and in the same class with Mr. Frothingham, was a young man who had inherited the creed of the Calvinistic branch of the Church. He began to doubt. After months of investigation he found himself not only outside the limits of that creed, but emphatically outside of Christianity itself. The very God in whom he had believed failed him, and this notwithstanding the most earnest desire to know the truth. Having a profound respect for Mr. Frothingham's mental ability and loyalty to his conviction, he went to him with the living question, 'What are the evidences of the existence of God?' The inquiry was met by an order to leave the room. Having suffered no little social coolness on account of his changing views, the questioner attributed the command to a sense of shocked reverence, and consequently wrote a note of apology. This at once elicited an answer in the most courteous and cordial spirit. From that time Mr. Frothingham showed to this young man the utmost kindness, and on one or two occasions the most generous consideration. No one can have a fuller appreciation of both the head and heart of Mr. Frothingham than he of whom this incident is related. It may be added that he soon found the Father, and that his life has been made joyous in serving his children."

At the end of the three years' course of study came the trial sermon preached in the village church. Edward Everett was

present; he was at that time President of the College, and always an expert in whatever pertained to pulpit oratory. He spoke cordially of his nephew's performance, and advised him to adopt his own former practice of committing his sermons to memory. Then the diploma was awarded, and the candidate known as a young man with conservative ideas was received into the simple fellowship of the Unitarian body of Christian believers. "The old," he tells us, "commended itself by its venerableness, the solidity of its traditions, and the authority of its great names, while the new was still vague and formless. I then and there decided to follow in the footsteps of my fathers, — a course more in sympathy with the prevailing temper of the age, and with the current of thought at Divinity Hall, though Emerson had delivered his address some years before, and the New Jerusalem was even then coming down from Heaven." But for all this, there is a curious bit of evidence that he was already moved by the anti-slavery agitation which disturbed so many placid relationships. Among his papers is the copy of a hymn written for the anti-slavery fair, to which he has affixed the date July 4, 1846. There are eight stanzas, of which the first three, on the whole the best, will give a sufficient estimate of the composition: —

" God of the Free, whose mighty hand
Delivered us from English Kings;
In whose high name this growing Land
Her gathering notes of Triumph sings, —

" Be patient with us in our shame;
Forgive us, Father, that ' Thy race '
Can still that sacred title claim,
And sully it before Thy face.

" Oh, touch our whitening lips with flame,
Oh, smite our hard hearts with Thy rod;
That we may dare to speak Thy name,
That we may dare to call Thee God."

On the 10th of March, 1847, Mr. Frothingham became the settled pastor of the North Church in Salem, Massachusetts; and, thirteen days after, a still more memorable event influenced his life. This was his marriage to Miss Caroline E. Curtis, daughter of a well-known and respected citizen of Boston. The period of preparation was passed, and what

remained of existence, suffused by the glow of affection in the happiest of human relations, was to be devoted to such practical ends as conscience might approve and circumstances indicate.

Salem, before the present century had accomplished its half, preserved many of the characteristics of an old Colonial town. It was a shady, quiet corner of this bustling earth, with a reminiscence of better days in its atmosphere. There were still old-fashioned shops where a bell jingled an alarm when a customer passed the threshold. There were doors opening upon the street, half of wood and half of glass, and capable of division in the middle, after the common usage of earlier days. There stood the mansions of the merchants, embodying all that to the time seemed admirable in comfort and stateliness. Upon this respectable background there moved an intellectual society, with something of stiffness in its good-breeding, and a feeling that candidates for its favor should show undoubted grandfathers.

The first years of the new ministry passed pleasantly enough. The claims of the parish were not exacting, and there was time for study and recreation. There were interesting people in the congregation, and agreeable friends were made among those who attended other churches. Social meetings were numerous and animated; the women were bright and well posted in current literature. The outlook was placid and prosperous. Pulpit service, acceptably rendered on the line of accepted beliefs, should produce pleasant vibrations that keep body and mind in healthy exercise, and give all that a majority of us require of life. That North Church might have sent its call to many men adapted to its conditions, and able to persist in them till the years ended their work with a laudatory obituary. But it had summoned a minister sensitive to the *Zeitgeist*, and with courage to follow any path it might indicate.

The anti-slavery agitation, to which the young preacher had already contributed, soon began to array society in hostile camps. Every one was exhorted to choose his side in the contest, and hard blows were given as the opposing forces dashed together. The Abolitionists denounced the Union as "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell," and pelted with bitter personalities those to whom its preservation

was a paramount consideration. Their leaders were men of spotless lives and noble aspirations, who had, or seemed to have, the New Testament, as well as all the watchwords of Democracy upon their side. They exercised the magnetism that men of ability will always exercise who are devoted to one idea, provided that idea is consonant with the highest ethics humanity can reach.

"It was a period of passionate war," says Mr. Frothingham in his "Recollections." "In every department of the Church and State the irrepressible conflict went on. It was no time for the calm voice of the loving spirit of Wisdom to be heard. It was no time to propose that the local laws respecting slavery should be remodelled, and the relations between whites and blacks readjusted on more equitable principles. The science of anthropology had no weight in America or anywhere else. No exhaustive study of race peculiarities could be entered on. The combatants had the whole field, and between the combatants there seemed to be no room for choice by a minister of the Gospel, an enthusiastic friend of humanity, a democrat, and a transcendentalist."

The above sentences, written in the decline of life, show a conception of a more conservative position which could not at that time be realized. A man whose name has gone into American history had pointed out the thing to be done could the North have accepted the proposition with the practical unanimity with which it supported the Civil War. In 1844 Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Mormon church, declared that Congress should be compelled by petitions from all the free States to pay for the slaves from the proceeds of sales from the public lands; and eleven years later Ralph Waldo Emerson indorsed this proposal as "in accordance with the interest of the South and the conscience of the North." But this wise plan of settlement met with no adequate response; other methods were preferred, at what terrible cost we all know. Yet even so, something ennobling would have been missed out of many New England lives; and this, to quote again from the "Recollections," would have been "an education in the broadest faith, in which dogma, creed, form, and rite were secondary to love; and love was not only universal but warm." Thus it came to pass that the pastor of the Salem church laid his gifts upon the anti-slavery altar, ready to accept whatever penalties might follow this act of devotion. He was then, and ever after, a transcendentalist, though he

subsequently supposed himself to be free of that philosophy. He came to repudiate the name, but never limited his thought to the confines of experience: mind was to him more than the synthesis of biological functions.

A bronchial affection, the result of six years of parish duty, rendered advisable a vacation under other skies. The summer and autumn of 1853 were passed by Mr. Frothingham in Europe; he went alone and reluctantly, although capable of enjoying in the highest way all that such a visit implies. The route was the usual one, comprising something of England and Scotland, and then Holland, the Rhine, Switzerland, and the wonderful cities of Italy. Experiences in these places are fully chronicled in an admirable series of letters. The vulgarized Europe of the tourist appears through a charming haze of individual temperament and refined sensibility. The limits of this memoir will admit only a few extracts indicating something of the personal angle from which the observations were made. It is fair to say that they give no adequate impression of the delightful mingling of description, fancy, and reverie found in the letters from which they are taken.

“Liverpool agreeably disappoints me in that it is a large, handsome city with broad streets and noble buildings here and there. It looks as if it were made for wear, and yet there is an architectural finish upon most of the houses that surprises me. Everything is solid, — everything, both mean and great. The dwellings of the miserable look sadly permanent. The very shanties do not appear evanescent like ours. The lanes and alleys are paved, as if they were to be lanes and alleys forever. A one-legged beggar with his hat off stood in the same spot, in the same position, with the same expression of countenance all yesterday afternoon, and had probably been standing so all the morning, and is doubtless standing so still. Everything is permanent. People all say that Liverpool is black and smoky. I am not struck with that, but I *am* struck by the many streets that look solitary and forsaken, and the many that are dark with poverty, and by the old deep shadow of wretchedness that falls on me everywhere, whether I walk or stand still. I have seen women cursed and smitten on the sidewalk by men, and weary girls kicked into the gutter by brutal cab-drivers, and little ragged boys following the passers-by clamoring for a penny. This I have seen, and it has struck me because I saw it all in the course of an hour’s stroll along the main street, and I am sorry indeed to say that the brighter side of all this did not appear to my eyes. These were sorrows, but I have had joys too. In particular this day has been one

of excitement and delight. In the first place I — even I — have listened twice to the preaching of James Martineau, nay, more, have taken him by the hand, nay, further still, am to take the cars with him and his family for Chester and Wales to-morrow.”

“In England everything which is not city is country, the land being in the hands of a few large proprietors who ornament but do not people it. Hence England’s rural beauty; hence, too, her evils many. I could not help feeling, while driving through her delicious plains, that Nature smiled at the expense of man’s tears. Were this land cultivated by freeholders, it would be clotted with villages like our own at home. Now the apparent difference between an English and a New England farmer is almost as great as that between a brute and a man.”

“The Cathedral of Cologne! how beautiful! Were it only finished it would be the wonder of the world. Nothing that I have seen compares with it. Even the Minster at York is small and imperfect beside it. The miserable humbugs in the shape of the ‘Three Kings’ whose skulls are done up in jewels and gold, and the other absurd and tawdry relics cannot mar its incomparable beauty. So far as it is finished, it is the perfection of Gothic architecture. But it is so far from being finished. Not a single one of the towers is by any means completed; one is scarcely begun. The nave is but half built, and it is wholly unroofed, and as you follow up the superb columns within, after aspiring two hundred feet, you come upon an unsightly ceiling of rude woodwork. The work still goes on. Three hundred men daily are employed upon the structure, and hundreds of thousands a year are spent upon it. The King of Prussia makes a large annual appropriation, and from other quarters princely and miscellaneous funds come in: the fees exacted by Gaspar, Melchier, and Balthazar, which are not small, go to swell the amount of contributions; and besides all this little boxes for donations are placed in conspicuous parts of the church soliciting silently the visitors for gold and silver. Into these receptacles fell no coin of mine. Not, you will believe me, because I grudge the groschen, but upon principle. I love architecture, and Gothic architecture such as this my soul delights in. I love towers and arches, the fluted column and fretted roof; but I love a simple faith more. These magnificent buildings, above anything else, perpetuate the pride and pomp of a stupendous and brilliant imposition. They make imposing and gorgeous the ritual of the world’s most idolatrous worship. And when I look on the ignorant famishing people, on the crafty well-fed priests, I think I would rather behold the ruins of this majestic cathedral than its perfect beauty. Once a pure sentiment

of worship moved the mountains, and piled the wrought stones one upon another. Now it is done by a false reverence for the past or by a miserable love of display. Once it was a noble, self-denying, and godly deed for barons and kings and wealthy nobles and fervent bishops to consecrate their revenues to the building of God's House instead of investing them in munitions of war; but that time has gone by, and religion demands now that men should put their money to other uses. It is not a noble or self-denying thing for a modern king to give his hundred thousand thalers a year towards building up an old temple for fame's sake while his people want education and bread. And it would be a very absurd thing for a young American, with sentiments like mine, and feelings such as those I entertain, to be giving his earnings to enrich and beautify buildings like this."

"I often stop and ask myself whether all this journeying is going to profit. I hope it is, but really cannot see how. In health I believe I am better; in spirits certainly I have improved. But whether my mind is refreshed or enlarged yet remains an unsettled problem. I do my best to improve; but a travelling life is of necessity a hurried, thoughtless life, a life of amusement and of novelty to the senses more than of substantial benefit. Truly I cannot comprehend how a person can justify himself in spending many months in such a way, nor how, having once been to Europe, he should desire to repeat the experience."

During the Salem pastorate came what Mr. Frothingham calls "the crisis in belief." He had come under the influence of Theodore Parker, and there followed an intimacy with that remarkable man which deflected a career from the path that had been marked out for it. It was a new education to receive the beams emanating from this warm personality, to feel the enormous force of his goodness, to be lifted to the level of his strenuous efforts in the service of humanity. His articles of faith—for which he offered no better evidence than he conceived to exist for the faiths of others—could not to-day be accepted, as he expressed them, by any one of half his intellectual vigor. His new reformation, if as much needed as that of Luther, was, in many of its aspects, quite as illogical. Granting the most fundamental of the ecclesiastical premises,—and Parker did grant them heartily,—the argument of Butler's Analogy, if not conclusive, is certainly impressive. Yet after knocking away their customary supports, this stalwart minister proclaimed, as it were *ex cathedra*, his

splendid assumptions of the personality and fatherhood of the Infinite, of the persistent existence of the individual, and of the absoluteness of the moral law. Of these ideas he made living powers, though he could never give any process of reasoning by which he had come by them. His influence upon Mr. Frothingham, as upon others, was of that personal kind which communicates a tremendous moral impetus to those sensitive to its touch. Attention was directed to books which threw a flood of light upon the difficulties of the New Testament. Schwegler and Baur, founder of the so-called Tübingen School, were then in vogue. The "*Theologische Jahrbücher*," the organ of the Professor of Historical Theology, was imported from Germany and faithfully studied. This ended in the adoption of what seemed a firmer basis for the higher aspirations of our race. The mild tenets of the Unitarians were discarded, but only to make a more rigorous affirmation of the religious needs of man. The new position is thus given in the "*Recollections*":—

"I contended that man had a spiritual nature; that this nature, on coming to the consciousness of its powers and needs, gave expression to exalted beliefs, clothing them with authority, building them into temples, ordaining them in the form of ceremonies and priesthoods. In support of this opinion, appeal was made to the great religions of the world; to the substantial agreement of all sacred books; to the spontaneous homage paid in all ages to saints and prophets; to the essential accord of moral precepts all over the globe; to the example of Jesus; to the Beatitudes and Parables; to the respect given by rude people to the noblest persons; to the credences that inspire multitudes; to the teachings of Schleiermacher, Fichte, Constant, Cousin, Carlyle, Goethe, Emerson, — in fact, to every leading writer of the last generation. All this was so beautiful, so consistent and convincing, so full of promise, so broad, plain, and inspiring, that, with a fresh but miscalculated enthusiasm, over-sanguine, thoughtless, the young minister undertook to carry his congregation with him, but without success; so he went elsewhere. This action proceeded from the faith that Parker instilled. Parker was pre-eminently, to those who comprehended him, a believer."

Little can be added to this frank statement. A change in conviction necessitated, in some sort, a change in the purpose of life. The young minister now found himself charged with the message that a Divine inspiration, acting through the reason and conscience of man, was as natural as the blood

that coursed in his veins, and quite as independent of his intellectual opinions. The pulpit was no longer to be distinguished from the broad platform of human brotherhood; the fervor, the eloquence, the scholarship lately given to one of many religions, must now be put to the service of Religion, comprehensive and universal.

But Mr. Frothingham's zeal in the anti-slavery cause was alone sufficient to bring his Salem ministry to a close. There had been a memorable scene in Boston, attending the return of a slave to his master. Intense indignation was excited by the surrender, which was, nevertheless, approved by a large part of the North Church congregation, as a necessary homage to the majesty of law. Thinking that during such a state of feeling the service of the communion would be a mockery, the pastor declined to take part in the administration of that ordinance. This brought the growing discontent to a climax. Separation was inevitable; and the minister accepted a call to Jersey City, there to organize a society where any word might be spoken, so it came from one of intellectual competency and honest life.

In the spring of 1855 Mr. Frothingham found the suburb of New York known as Jersey City substantially rural in its character. There were pleasant meadows and broad avenues, and these made it a desirable residence for well-to-do persons, who were ferried to the metropolis to pass their hours of business. Much of the cultivation for which wealth gives the opportunity was there to be found; and the meeting-house built for the new society was dedicated to a large and liberal faith. The chief peculiarity of the ministry now inaugurated was the disuse of the communion service. In Salem the observance of this rite had been found "formal, dry, short, and tiresome." To the majority of the society it was "a mystical ceremony with which they had no concern," while in some of the minority it was thought to encourage "a dangerous kind of self-righteousness." In the new society this "last attenuation of the Roman sacrament of transubstantiation" was dropped as an illogical adjunct to the liberal faith. But the criticism, as we are told in the "Recollections," applied only to the rite as it was then administered in Unitarian churches. He had attended an Episcopal communion service where "the invitation was large and inclusive, comprehending everybody

who, though far off, looked to the light, — everybody who had the least glimmer of divine radiance.” He acknowledges that a symbol often goes farther than an argument, and believes that one so ancient and consecrated should be preserved. “A friend of mine,” he says, “included all religious teachers in his commemoration. This was a step in the right direction ; but if the people are not ready for this yet, they may welcome an extension of the reign of spiritual love among disciples whom theological hatred has kept apart.”

As it had been discovered that Theodore Parker was too rare a man to be confined to a little church in West Roxbury, so it became evident that the minister most nearly resembling him in ability and theological outlook must be brought nearer to the centre of things. Devoted hearers had journeyed from New York to attend the services of the Jersey church, and the word was passed that its pastor was wanted where the influence of his preaching could produce a maximum of effect. There was a desire for a third Unitarian society in the great metropolis ; and as the former sectarian connection had never been distinctly repudiated, Mr. Frothingham was called to assume its pastorate. And so began those twenty years of mature and devoted service that made him a prominent figure among the clergy of New York. He was to come conspicuously to the front as the much-abused, much-loved, courageous worker upon religious lines. He was to be widely known as the eloquent protester against the defective liberality of the sect in which he had been nurtured, as the fearless advocate of unpopular reformations, and as the herald of a day when Science and Religion should work together in the service of man.

The society first met in Ebbitt Hall, and it was not till three years after that a church was built for its reception. The Unitarian ministers of the city refused to attend its dedication, and in 1865, when the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian churches was formed, Mr. Frothingham decided that he could not accept the terms of its fellowship. In the spring of 1869 the church was sold to another congregation. The acoustic properties of the building were not favorable, and it was felt that the peculiar work of the preacher could be better done if freed from all suspicion of ecclesiasticism. Certain persons whose presence it was desir-

able to secure were repelled by architectural display when employed as a stimulant to devotion. It were well that the break with Unitarianism should be formally recognized. A removal was made to Lyric Hall on the Sixth Avenue, and the society thereafter called itself The Independent Liberal Church.

The congregation was composed of all sorts and conditions of men ; there were Unitarians and Universalists who had chafed within the limits of their respective folds, Spiritualists, come-outers, and miscellaneous unbelievers who could not be classified. Agencies were devised to carry the contagion caught from the pulpit into the moral and intellectual development of the week. A club was organized in connection with the society, where the reading of papers, followed by critical or approving comments of listeners, stimulated the imagination or fired the ideals of young people who have since made their mark in the world. There was a meeting for children on Sunday afternoon, and a special service for their use was prepared by the pastor. Lyric Hall during the week was used for dancing, and in 1875 there was a final removal to the Masonic Temple, which offered more spacious accommodation, fixed seats, and a good organ. The form of service scarcely varied from that of the Unitarian churches ; the exercises, however, were more comprehensive in their character, and the scriptures of the older religions were as freely used as the Christian Bible. It was hoped to make every form of intellectual conviction conduce to the building up of character as well as to the sustaining of a high spiritual faith.

The ministry in New York ended in the spring of 1879. The physical force of the preacher had been exhausted by arduous labor ; the mental power remained, but could no longer control the instrument of expression. Much work had been done outside the requirements of the parish, and it was necessary that rest be sought from the intellectual strain of twenty years of unbroken service. But the beloved pastor was requested to withdraw the resignation which infirmities at length forced him to tender. There was a hope that a year of rest in Europe might restore him to the service of the Liberal Church his exertions had created. A touching farewell was given by members of the society at the Union League Theatre. It was a magnificent testimonial from the

human lives that had been made better and purer, from the human hearts that had gone out to Mr. Frothingham as to their friend and comforter. Among the speakers were George W. Curtis, E. C. Stedman, T. W. Higginson, Samuel Longfellow, and Joseph May. Letters were read from R. W. Emerson, O. W. Holmes, William Lloyd Garrison, and others scarcely less known and respected. The pamphlet containing what was said or written upon that occasion is inspiring reading to-day; it is a noble and just recognition by the competent of services such as a man of exceptional gifts and of exceptional zeal to put them to the highest use is able to give the world.

The work accomplished in that fifth of a century of brilliant life cannot here be given in adequate detail. It is little to say that he was a refined yet forcible orator. That would feebly express the impression made by the strong yet graceful figure, by the penetrating quality of the blue-gray eyes. It would convey nothing of the spirit that went into "those marvellous discourses, every sentence containing an epigram, an image, a thought, a noble sentiment." The quoted words are those of Mr. E. C. Stedman, not a man to use language carelessly or gush into over-statement. His parishioner, Judge George C. Barrett of New York, after speaking of Mr. Frothingham's fulness of thought and keen analysis, declares that "what appealed to the judicial mind was his controversial fairness. He invariably understated the facts upon which his own position rested, while he gave full and adequate expression to the adversary's argument." The sense of equity was strong in his nature. However provoking the antagonist, I cannot find that he ever returned a blow of questionable fairness, — something that can scarcely be said of Phillips, Garrison, or Parker.

The side turned to the children of the society was singularly warm and sunny. His sympathetic insight penetrated to their needs, and he touched them at many points with a beneficent influence. He had the gift of impression; and the upward impulse given to young lives is to-day bearing abundant fruit. His Sunday-school books are delightfully simple and attractive; they scarcely leave the familiar lines of instruction. What he says of the privilege of prayer, the benefit of church-going, the duty of obedience to the teachings of Jesus, might be incorporated in any orthodox manual. The truth as he

would present it to the mature must be given to the weak imperfectly, and clothed in a temporary form. If a circle is to be shown in perspective, it must be drawn as an ellipse. That a man occupying his radical position seems to have seen this so clearly, is worthy of notice. A lady who received her early religious instruction from Mr. Frothingham, thus expresses herself: —

“The children learned to love and reverence him at Sunday-school, but not only there. To one young life at least, and one in such relations is but a sign of more, he was the inspiration of every day. The walk to Sunday-school with him crowned the week; the delight of taking a note to his house or of going there without a pretext stands out like gleams of light against the background of dim years gone by. It was the usual thing to ask no question of the maid who opened his door; and this privilege must have originated in his gracious understanding of childhood, to run breathless up the one flight that led to his study door, always open, and then, with almost reverent care, to steal in and see whether he were standing and writing at his high desk, and if he were, to wait until he was ready with the welcome that always came. There to wander among the books that lined the wall to the ceiling, and to borrow, with his wise permission, and take home to read, books that seemed doubly worth the reading because they were his. When he was away, a note scribbled and left on his table must often have made him smile. His smile never hurt, even when the maiden of fourteen asked for Mill’s ‘Subjection of Women.’ ‘Why do you want that, child?’ The child confessed that she had a benighted friend of her own age who was unable to understand Mill, and she wished to read her this particular essay, and ‘explain it’ to her. ‘You must tell me about it afterwards,’ he said, with perfect sympathy — though the smile that twinkled through the sympathy is more apparent now than it was then.”

William von Humboldt excludes from the definition of language, the distinguishing characteristic of man, everything but actual speech. The conventional sign of it that we find in books is little more than an embalmed mummy from which the spirit has departed. There is no printed substitute for the life of inflection and emphasis imparted by a living personality. Bearing this in mind, while reading a random selection from the thirteen hundred and eleven sermons prepared by Mr. Frothingham, I cannot deny him a place among the memorable preachers of our century. Discourses so carefully studied, so

acute and delicate in criticism, so saturated with the upward aspiration of a devout soul, were in themselves no mean outcome of a total life-work. Most of them were given during the New York ministry; many of these were published in pamphlet-form and circulated in Europe as well as largely throughout the West. The great dailies began to report him in full; they found that the public they addressed wished to know what this vigorous and original teacher had to say. Strangers of intelligence who visited the city would not leave it without hearing him. Newspaper correspondents and writers for the weekly press endeavored to represent the general effect of his services. From one of the latter it may be well to quote an impression given in 1875:—

“Lyric Hall on Sixth Avenue, opposite Reservoir Park, is chiefly known as the meeting-place of an independent religious congregation of which Octavius Brooks Frothingham is the minister. Its entrance suggests concerts and entertainments of various kinds. Ascending the broad stairway, you enter a long narrow audience room, tastefully painted and frescoed, with seats close together facing a raised platform with a small desk upon it, which is usually covered on Sunday with expressive flowers. The room fills very rapidly. Most people seem to know each other. They have cheerful, earnest, intelligent faces, with a certain alertness and expectancy in countenance and air, as though they came to hear something and not to show their clothes. There is an organ voluntary, and still the people come in, some five or six hundred of them. Presently a man, spare but elegant in figure, of medium height, with thin earnest finely chiselled face, small gray eyes, full brow, and iron-gray hair, apparently fifty years old, appears on the platform and takes his seat. The people look at each other with a significantly pleased expression which seems to say, ‘He has come.’ The choir has sung, and he rises with a gravity and dignity you hardly expect; with a face which seems as though it were just brought from the studio of a sculptor who has done his utmost to express intelligence, refinement, and moral elevation,—a Boston face you would say, were you to meet it in San Francisco or Rome or St. Petersburg. He reads; the tones suggest Beacon Hill and Harvard College,—clear, deep, earnest, but not musical; the vehicle of thoughts, but not the carriage which the affections usually ride in. He prays; it is a prolonged thanksgiving and aspiration that uplifts whoever yields to it and almost transfigures him.

“After the singing comes an address. It begins simply enough, without text or parade of any sort, with the announcement of some fact

or principle. Soon it grows like a river fed by invisible tributaries. It taxes the mind; it enchains the attention. It elucidates a theme instead of driving platitudes like nails into the individual conscience and heart; and it takes history, literature, philosophy, science, and art to do it with. Grand things drop from the speaker's lips as he stands there, without book or paper, speaking out of a fulness that seems to increase faster than it overflows in the choicest words. You forget yourself in admiration, and only fear that he will stop before your mind is full; and when the silver stream ceases, and you catch your breath and come to yourself, it seems as though it had borne you to the gates of the Holy City, and left you just on the outside, with the earth behind you, but with infinity before. You no longer wonder that Lyric Hall is famous, and you ask, 'Who is this Mr. Frothingham?'

But for all that has been said there was about this man little of that personal magnetism which is physical rather than moral in its composition. Though a confessed influence in the metropolitan life of New York, he excited no gush of popular enthusiasm like that which supported the ministry of Beecher, Storrs, or Chapin. Without ecclesiastical accessories, impatient of all that looked like conformity to a conventional policy, careful to keep the underlying thought logical in its methods, his word was never mixed with any base alloy of sensationalism. Not the almost audible applause that could scarcely be restrained in some of the crowded churches, but a deeper silence, was the natural tribute to the moving effect of sermon as well as of prayer.

But the New York life was divided among many other activities. He wrote "The History of New England Transcendentalism," "The Religion of Humanity," an elaborate biography of Theodore Parker, and another of Gerrit Smith, as well as books for the religious instruction of children. He prepared articles for the "American Cyclopedia," and was a frequent contributor to the "Christian Examiner," the "North American Review," the "Nation," the "Tribune," the "Independent," and other periodicals. For years he worked faithfully as Secretary of the National Freedman's Association. He visited the poor and afflicted, and it was Dr. Bellows's humorous complaint that no sooner had Frothingham emptied his own purse for a beggar's relief than he sent to him to do likewise. The reformers claimed the sympathy of one so widely known as a come-outer, and it is

needless to say abused him when he could not accept their specific for the ills of humanity. He spoke at meetings unconnected with his church,—one, for instance, in commemoration of “Dan Bryant,” a comic actor. “It would be pleasant,” he said, upon this occasion, “to think that I had ever done him as much good as he has done me. He was a benefactor in his way, and it was a much needed way. In a world full of care, anxiety, depression of spirits, and bitterness of heart, who has a right to be called a benefactor if he has not who promotes harmless merriment?”

The most notable work outside the parish duties was done in connection with the Free Religious Association. He was the organizing head of this body, whose object was the recognition of the religious sentiment, in its last analysis, in all human minds. The majority of its supporters believed “that religion was an eternal necessity, and the administration of it an absolute demand.” It proposed to remove all dividing lines, and — while leaving every one to his own judgment in matters of dogmatic belief — to unite in a common spiritual aspiration. “The underlying thought of the Association,” he wrote in a letter a few months before his death, “was the existence of a general, human, spiritual religion comprehending all modes of faith, but prior to them all and dependent on none.” His friends protest against any literal acceptance of the sense of his own shortcomings so freely acknowledged in the “Recollections.” “His stern self-criticism,” writes Rev. J. W. Chadwick, “will not be accepted by those who remember him as President of this Association, the perfect art with which he presided over the great assemblages gathered in its earlier years and at its banquet table, and the remarkable brilliancy and beauty which were married to the breadth and liberality of his annual addresses which reviewed the situation of the religious world from year to year. But it may be conceded that he had not ‘the natural impulse and vigor,’ the ‘rugged speech,’ and the ‘vivacity of humor,’ the lack of which he afterwards deplored.”

This is no place either to criticise or to commend the work accomplished by the Free Religious Association; it is sufficient to emphasize the object to be attained as Mr. Frothingham regarded it. This was to do away with prejudices which hindered the growth of normal religious sentiment, and inci-

dentally to foster the belief that reason, when guided by science, experience, and aspiration, was an authority superior to all others. It was probably the first society in the world based on the broad assumption that religion is innate in man, and that forms and dogmas, which do not touch its essence, are determined by circumstances. Many thoughtful men and women associated themselves with the new society ; but the world was scarcely ready to approve a platform where representatives of all faiths could meet upon equal terms.

It is worth while to correct an idle rumor to the effect that Mr. Frothingham was dissatisfied by the result of his years of devoted labor, and even doubted whether his energies had been wisely employed. The story arose from some remark, casually dropped to a newspaper reporter, of which the significance was misunderstood. The minister might indeed have felt that the destructive portion of the task committed to him had been sufficiently done, and that when he resumed work it would be on constructive lines more suited to his temperament ; his action would be continuous, but not necessarily identical. Yet it is not surprising if one passing into the shade of bodily infirmity, from a life lived at the utmost stretch of his powers, should have heard a whisper of sceptical interrogation as to whether his service had been given in the best way. Through the fogs of physical depression, what might have been done always looms larger than what has been accomplished ; the imperfections, the mistakes, the deficiencies common to mortality are unduly magnified. It is he who has gained the ten talents, not he who has buried his lord's money, who feels himself to be the unprofitable servant.

The period of rest and travel in Europe did not enable Mr. Frothingham to go back to his round of duties in New York as he had fondly hoped. He longed to return to his old place, to breast again the tide of metropolitan life, to battle with its waves as of yore. It was there alone that his energies could find adequate scope ; there were the tasks he had fitted himself to do. But he was stayed by that incompleteness of opportunity which mocks man's best equipment, and constitutes so large a part of the pathos of life. The spirit, mature in insight, in tact, in high enthusiasm, was more than ever willing ; but the flesh was weak.

The incipient paralysis that had set in advanced very slowly

during the sixteen years he had yet to live. It affected his articulation and spoiled his beautiful penmanship. He resumed his residence in Boston, a city endeared by so many old associations. He attended many public meetings of the Unitarians, feeling again drawn towards them by the increased liberality of their position which his own work had done so much to promote. He wrote the lives of his friends George Ripley and William Henry Channing, and prepared a brief memoir of David A. Wasson, a man admired by all who knew him as well for his clear and incisive thought as for his poetic imagination. Besides these were the book upon Boston Unitarianism and the interesting volume of "Recollections," from which extracts have been given. Of Mr. Frothingham's contributions to the Proceedings of this Society it is unnecessary to speak. His limitations were accepted with serenity; his interest in the improvement of the world was as vivid as ever, and was shown in such humbler ways as were now practicable. There was no noticeable falling off in his mental powers, and he was mercifully spared the one failure that he most dreaded. The end came peacefully on the day after his seventy-third birthday, November 27, 1895.

One more duty remained to be discharged. Mr. Frothingham had long believed that great social advantage would come from a better method of disposing of the dead. To support this belief in the only effective way, he left written directions that the body he had tenanted should be given to a quicker process of transmutation than is consistent with earth-burial. Like many other refined and thoughtful men, he was convinced of the advantages of cremation, not only for the sanitary reasons which in this day of ever-growing cities seem imperative, but as reducing to a minimum the necessary expenses of the poor. He saw that the money spent in buying land and constructing sepulchres in our ostentatious and tasteless cemeteries might be used in better ways for the gratification of the sentiments of love and reverence towards the departed. It is certain that the example of men of mark and influence can do more to encourage a beneficent change of practice than a hundred tracts devoted to its advocacy. Especially is this true of clergymen, who can thus testify against any remnant of the Egyptian superstition that the soul is in some way interested in the persistence of the body. It is

surely unfortunate that no less than four vice-presidents of the Cremation Society of this State failed to bear this testimony to a reform which they recommended for public adoption. Both as a citizen and a clergyman, Mr. Frothingham thought it right to declare his conviction in the only way in which it could have much influence upon others.

It is obviously improper that memoirs contributed to the Proceedings of this Society should have any savor of tracts for the defence of heresy or the strengthening of orthodoxy in regard to religious belief. But in the case of a man whose effective life was devoted to a single end — that of removing the restraints of social penalty from the freest questioning of an alleged supernatural religion — some adumbration of his intellectual attitude cannot be omitted. In giving what seems to me a fair impression of the general trend of Mr. Frothingham's opinions, I do not doubt that some of his friends will think that certain extreme or passing expressions should be more distinctly emphasized. The actions and reactions of the human mind upon the bewildering multitude of facts presented to it do not make for consistency. So long as the character is enlarging, there is, no doubt, an underlying consistency in its manifestations that is not represented on the surface. Mr. Frothingham never formulated any system; he was sensitive to the different and opposing aspects of things. His thought is often a passing effluence of mind and mood; it demands the correction which, upon some other occasion, he would readily supply. Mr. Chadwick speaks of his friend as "an optimist on Saturday night and a pessimist on Monday morning"; and Professor Adler resorts to paradoxes: "he was an inveterate doubter who never doubted; he was a liberal, expanding into a larger and larger freedom, who always remained a conservative."

An extract from a sermon of 1870 upon Personal Independence is a fair specimen of a prevailing tone heard through all his preaching: —

"The grand teacher and instigator of personal independence is, when all is said, religion; religion lays on the solitary soul the most tremendous responsibilities, and summons it to the most tremendous conflicts. Its first declaration is that each person is a living soul, placed on the earth

to work out its salvation, gifted with heavenly capacities, destined to immortal glories, and aided by celestial influence. Spiritual experiences must be strictly personal. Each soul must hope, pray, believe, trust, aspire for itself; must perform its own mission, and render its own account. The individual being is called to the front rank, and commanded to meet mortal foes in every conceivable form of care, suffering, sorrow, temptation; to be superior to want, pain, poverty, distress; to renounce the world; to live an eternal life. . . . That the discipline of personal independence is painful, there can be no doubt. It brings all kind of pain with it. It involves conflict with besetting foes, — foes of the tribe and of the household. It is full of sorrow and bitterness, of fear and terror. It entails loneliness often, sometimes solitariness, often depression. It tries the courage of the heart to the utmost. But there are great compensations, by the way. The feeling of personal self-respect and honor, — what a solace is that? worth all it costs and more. The enjoyment of one's own conviction; the joy of one's own approval; the knowledge that there is music in one's own heart!"

Elsewhere he avers that the faith cherished in the common forms of religion was feeble in the realm of immediate interests and concerns. Its unintermitted emphasis upon theology seriously impaired the available resources of the mind in practical directions. If the intellectual force expended in dogmatic speculations had been put to the study of man's condition, and in making that condition more desirable, questions at present unanswerable might long ago have received an adequate reply. He laments that minds engaged in these futile researches have been the choicest minds, "the best endowed, the most carefully educated, the most thoroughly trained; theirs was the eagerness for knowledge, the patience in research, the intellectual courage, the insight into principles, the literary skill to state their thoughts effectively. All this culture withdrawn from the practical duties of life!" He admits, however, that this pursuit of theology was inevitable, nay, even exalting, in the ages when the human mind had no other intellectual bent. But the question which the people ask of their teachers to-day is not whether God exists in a single or threefold personality, but whether human creatures are anything more than beasts; not on what terms the finite and infinite can be reconciled, but how a better understanding can be brought about between classes of men; not whether a

few are predetermined to everlasting blessedness, but whether the wretched many can have a more hopeful outlook in their earthly days. The preacher demanded a faith with knowledge, not a faith that dispenses with knowledge. However it may have been a quarter of a century ago, much of this will be to-day admitted by many ecclesiastics of what is loosely called the Broad Church, while any inference as to the present untenableness of their position will be as strenuously denied.

Like many men who have done conspicuous service in the world, Mr. Frothingham was swayed by the sudden uprush of feelings that in some sense were temporary. At one time he is struck with the splendor of human capacity and achievement, at another he finds his gravest doubt of personal immortality in the unworthiness of mankind to enjoy such a privilege. He faced the spectres of the mind, and did not lay them without making full report of their hideousness. He declared that every day in his life he had seen the righteous forsaken and his seed begging bread. The individual may now and then be perfected by suffering, but for every such example he knew ten where it had "crushed, soured, embittered, demoralized." That in some possible continuation of life beyond the grave justice would be done, was not apparent. The same Power must rule there that rules here, and here equity is not the rule. It was not evident that Lazarus would be more comfortable hereafter than when he lay at the gate of Dives, and looked to the dogs for mitigation of his suffering. The old consolations might do for idlers and sentimentalists, but clear-sighted men, facing the facts, were at least freed from the necessity of justifying the ways of God to man. The relief of this position he found measureless; he was not bound to apologize for things as they were.

But the man who stated all this more fully than it is here given, would under a more frequent inspiration put a ringing emphasis upon the trustworthiness of the religious sentiment. His noble sermon upon "The practical value of a belief in God" abounds in cheerful affirmations. Though associated with grotesque forms of thought, he urges that this belief has stood for perfect justice, absolute truth, and love that cannot be grieved away. It assists the conviction that truth is riveted to something permanent, that justice is no product of balanced experiences, but belongs to the organic structure of the world.

The idea may drop form after form, definition after definition, but the substance of the faith will remain and go on from strength to strength. Even in its last attenuation "it will lend power to the flickering will, and steadiness to the fluttering aspirations of man." Theodore Parker had led the army of radical religious thought with the vehement energy of Shakespeare's Henry V. His successor in the service explored the infinite in all directions with the meditative habit and keen intelligence of Hamlet, but with the added power of selecting a conviction from the flitting presentations of the brain, and of following where it led.

How far Mr. Frothingham was satisfied with the larger interpretations characteristic of the Unitarians of the present time is a question somewhat difficult to answer. Sentences from his later letters and other writings might be quoted which can be interpreted as pointing in either direction. In one of his essays he declares that "the coming religion must be Christian in name, because Christianity, as an ideal faith, has worked itself into our common life. It is the soul of our laws, of our customs, of our institutions." When the Unitarians broadened their terms of fellowship, it was his wish that the independent church in New Bedford, in charge of a favorite nephew, should renew its affiliation with their body. In a letter addressed to this gentleman, Rev. Paul Revere Frothingham, he says:—

"Some kind of limitation seems to be necessary to perfection of power. Just as the flame of a lamp (whence is all the light) must be confined within a chimney of glass in order that it may be serviceable, so must the absolute spirit be shut within a circle of sectarianism. But even as the glass chimney must be thin and clear and clean, so must the enclosing creed or organization be free from dogmatism, and be as transparent as possible. For my own part I do not believe that the ideal religion can be organized separately in 'avowed independence' of all existing or formulated institutions, though I am glad to have the experiment tried. New bottles may be best for new wine, but *some* bottle is required, else the wine is spilled."

But this must be interpreted as not incompatible with a very cordial interest in an independent church in Tacoma, which emphatically repudiates such restraints as may exist in the mildest form of Unitarianism. He believed that this west-

ern society, as well as that of his friend Dr. Adler of New York, might assert the spiritual value of life in affirmations broad enough to satisfy the religious element in man; and that this would be better than federation even upon the formula of the vaguest theism. In 1894 he writes thus of Unitarianism in the "Free Church Record," the organ of the Tacoma society: —

"It is not a form of religion as much as a form of opinion. It lacks historical continuity. It is a sect, a piece cut off from the mass of human tradition. It is wanting in fervor, glow, impetus, sweep. Emerson said that the born Unitarians were wanting in momentum. It is my hope that the new movement will restore the ancient push of conviction, the life without the dogma. We have had enough of criticism and division. Unitarianism is a parlor system addressed to the cultivated, educated, fastidious few. This has been said over and over again, and is as true now as it ever was."

To Rev. A. W. Martin, minister of the Tacoma church, he writes: "My sympathy with you is very warm, and I am not surprised at your zeal. Indeed, were I a young man I should do exactly what you are doing." From other letters to the same gentleman are taken the following extracts: —

"The longer I live the more I prize modesty, humbleness, and simplicity; the more I believe that others are as sincere as I am, know as much, have as full conviction, are led by as absorbing a love of truth. The cant of mere Liberalism, — as if to be a come-outer was enough to ensure justice of opinion, as if to be a conservative believer was surely to be wrong — is to me excessively unpleasant; I am glad to find you avoid it. The prevalence of gush is most deplorable."

"Avoid polemics as far as possible. Lay emphasis upon the universal principles of the religious life, and let the older systems go their way unassailed. If men see their limits, and how unimportant they are in the work of building up character and promoting humanity, they will gradually come to you. A new departure of a violent kind seems to me unnecessary. Your success will be your vindication. Would I were young and could throw myself into the cause of true Liberalism! But the next best thing is to see young people do it."

In Mr. Frothingham's sketches of his departed friends, their limitations were never omitted; the Cromwellian wart was

given its full prominence in their portraitures. In the "Recollections" the shortcomings of Dr. Bellows and Dr. Osgood are set forth in language as incisive as that which records their excellences. His memoir of the late President and benefactor of this Society displayed what were thought his defects in a positive, up-and-down manner somewhat at variance with a certain obligation to suave utterance which is commonly recognized as fitting in such compositions. But truth, as he saw it, was with this man a first consideration, and conventions, however amiable, must yield to its requirements. "Death is a great deceiver," he once wrote, "putting wings upon very earthly bodies." He never desired the concealment by such mortuary plumage of infirmities that any biographer of his might discover. Knowing this, I sought to find out what was deficient or second-rate in his character, and interrogated those who knew him well, as to the points wherein he manifestly failed to reach the ideal stature which the best of us cannot hope to attain. Surely they are fortunate who have so few failures to be noted. "His greatest fault," writes one of his intimate friends, "was a disposition to undervalue the importance of his adhesion to this side or that in any fight." And the same gentleman notices, what any careful reader of his books will discover, that "he lacked the instinct of minute accuracy in biographical and historical writing. The small mistakes in his 'Transcendentalism' and in his various biographies are numerous." It may be added that in taking his rapid and picturesque views of the past he sometimes looked through Brobdingnagian spectacles. A single instance of this will suffice. In his "Recollections" he tells us of one of his teachers, "a Mr. Capen, a poor humpbacked cripple, who could not get out of his chair," but who, nevertheless, "generously exercised a cowhide which he kept upon his table." To this it may be objected that, at the period in question, the most refined citizens in Boston would not have sent their children to a school in which cowhiding was considered a proper impulsion to learning. The present writer, having tested in person Mr. Capen's educational methods, deposes that, in his day at least, a mild application of a ruler, or often the back of a hairbrush, to the palm of the hand, fell lamentably short of those incentives to the acquisition of knowledge that the wisdom of our ancestors unhesitatingly commended.

The complaint is heard that there was something of aloofness in Mr. Frothingham's social habit, that he was affected by moods, and had a trick of self-depreciation not inconsistent with much genuine self-esteem. No one can read his sermons without observing that he often used the same form of words with widely different meanings, and we have seen that alternate aspects of things presented themselves with equal vividness. Seasons of undue depression were doubtless followed by corresponding reactions. At one time the locusts were devouring the harvests he had laboriously planted; at another, the grain was vigorously growing and likely to return the outlay a hundred fold. The results of such work as he was called upon to do could not be shown by any method of mental book-keeping. Only vague guesses could represent its final outcome,—and these must be affected by the weather and the hundred accidents which influence the ebb and flow of physical vitality. As to the charge of aloofness, it must be admitted that his quest for freedom in all things caused a certain shrinking from entangling alliances even upon high spiritual planes. Those most sensitive to ideals do not easily stoop to the enthusiasms of friendship. Yet worthy friends he had, men and women of courage and intellect, the best that his generation offered. Much might be said of this choice companionship; yet, when all had been written, there must be added, in the words of her who knew him best, "he was always a lonely man."

Mr. Frothingham nowhere echoes the complaint that the path of the reformer must, from a social point of view, be a *via dolorosa*. New teaching-must win tolerance; it has no right to demand it. No great and heroic thing was ever done without bitter opposition. He who challenges beliefs entwined with the tenderest human emotions has no reason to complain of any social penalty his course may entail. Granted that the work ought to be done, it ought not to be easy to do. Intolerance, so much out of favor at present, is the wholesome law of the natural world in which we find ourselves. The confidence that, do or say what we will, we shall encounter no honest, outspoken antagonism has removed a salutary restraint in many departments of modern life. But giving this truth its full weight, it is difficult to see how any orthodox believer who has intelligence enough to make his opinion of

value, can fail to recognize the importance of Mr. Frothingham's work in the actual condition of things. Such a believer accepts the highly emotional methods of the Salvation Army as stimulating to better living a class that statelier forms of worship fail to attract. And, however he may deplore its existence, he must be conscious of another class, including many natural leaders of the community, to which sacred book and sacramental rite are as little uplifting as are the "knee-drill" and blast of discordant instruments to the refined church-goer. Yet it is plain that this abandonment of doctrinal belief has been followed — temporarily at least — by a weakening of the moral forces which make for veracity, honesty, and purity. And if this is true even now, when what may be called the modern ethical spirit has been so largely developed, it was far more true during the years of the New York ministry. Science, according to the interpretation of its representatives of undoubted fame and ability, testified that man was but a bubble floating for an instant upon the bloody stream of evolution, — a passing phosphorescence playing upon the surface of an iron necessity. And this doctrine of many of the educated was popularized to a fearful plausibility for half-educated minds. It tended to the degradation of life, to the loss of capacity for goodness, if not to the acquisition of qualities positively evil. Remembering this, all may well be grateful for a voice that could make itself heard in this sterile wilderness of unbelief, — even if it could utter no tenderer message than that "God is; not has been or will be. He is infinitely more than the best believe, or the happiest hope."

I suppose that most clergymen win expressions of love and gratitude from women whom they have assisted in bearing the burdens of life, and it may be well to note that this clergyman who made it his business to enthrone Reasonableness in the place of Authority did not lack them. We have seen how his ministry appealed to men of high competency in criticism and of acknowledged leadership in life. It also reached some of the best representatives of the sex most inclined to construe the order of nature after the theological methods that have long held supremacy. A lady says of Mr. Frothingham, "I owe him more than any other influence that came into my life; he opened my eyes to the

truth that makes free, showed me how to walk with uplifted head and see the light of the Divine Spirit shining through and beyond all clouds and complications." To another, well known in circles of philanthropy and literature, "he stood for the ideal of stainless manhood." Another speaks of the "comfort he gave me when the dark shadow fell upon my pathway"; and yet another affirms that "his views of death were the most uplifting and inspiring I have known." All which goes to show that no special form of consecration or creed is essential to the upward direction of the feminine life.

No careful reader of Mr. Frothingham's sermons can fail to see that the distinction between reason and faith, between the power of conceiving and the instinct of believing, is as clear to him as to many of his brethren who are in charge of the creeds of orthodoxy. He clung to the emotions produced by the old beliefs even while repudiating the fetters of the past from which, to his mind, a living present must escape. Yet he acknowledged no allegiance to the strictly scientific spirit that recognizes no truth incapable of demonstration; the boasted results of science were, after all, only hypothetical,—their veracity depending upon laws of thought which are scarcely open to investigation. His warm affirmations came as a much-needed glow in this our chilly "drift period of theology." While so many were withdrawing from ecclesiastical organizations, came his imperative warning not to break with the greatest of the historic manifestations of the religious spirit. He recognized that his own position was not final, nor even definite; it was in the nature of suggestion, nothing more. This "doubter who never doubted" worked on the side of constructive beliefs in religion; he breasted that movement towards negation which increase of knowledge had rendered inevitable. He imposed upon his hearers the law of his own personality, and stimulated to devotion those who could no longer be influenced by architectural display or the solemn music of organs. "In prayer," so runs the testimony of a visitor to his church, "the upturned boyish face with its look of rapt admiration, the apparent forgetfulness of self in which he returned thanks to the supreme Father for the many blessings of our daily life, impressed and subdued his audience into the perfect silence of heartfelt worship." A beam of light shot through his sermons which their printed words

—apt and beautiful as these are — cannot convey. He kindled hope, enthusiasm, love for humanity in human hearts well-nigh dazed into inactive scepticism by the innumerable molecules of science which rush hither and thither without explicable issue. No poor outcome this of any life born into the human history of our dying century!

The instructors of our race whose preaching and living make for righteousness, are no exclusive company. "The Bactrian, Samian sage, and all who taught the right" are admitted to their gracious fellowship. Between such impulsions to good living as inspire the unlettered enthusiast and the teachings of the instructed mind, whose workings seem to us normal and regular, there are innumerable gradations that shade one into another. But so far as they wrought for the strengthening of human character, all are entered among the world's benefactors. Some of these ministers stand out from their fellows; and from these we strip the tawdry ornaments of ecclesiastical title or college doctorate to lift them to the level of those who worked outside the range of contemporary approval that confers such decorations, — Cheverus, Channing, Brooks, Parker, names to be spoken together and revered alike, if not by us, then by our successors. And to these I do not hesitate to add the name of Frothingham.

"For he was Freedom's champion, one of those,
The few in number, who had not o'erstept
The charter to chastise which she bestows
On such as wield her weapons; he had kept
The whiteness of his soul, and thus men o'er him wept."